

BREAKING RITUAL SILENCE

*An Anthology of
Ritual Abuse Survivors' Stories*

edited by Jeanne Marie Lorena
and Paula Levy

preface by Chrystine Oksana

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Dedication

To those who died before they could escape

To those who have not yet escaped

To those who are free, but do not yet believe it

Acknowledgements

This anthology is a collective effort of many people, both survivors and those who have not been directly assaulted by ritual abuse. Each person who helped had to push past the prohibition against speaking out about ritual abuse and open up emotionally to the depth of suffering and depravity that humans can inflict upon each other. Each person who helped gave from the heart.

First, of course, I want to thank the authors whose writings appear in these pages. Equally generous and courageous were those writers who reluctantly withdrew their contributions for personal reasons. And the many survivors who considered writing but decided against submitting a chapter — I honor and thank them as well.

Paula Levy is my friend, assistant editor, and Rock of Gibraltar, staying by me through personal crises, writer's block, and arguments about grammar and punctuation. Jeremiah, who contributed the very first story back in 1993, became a close friend. It has been a joy to share the vision and the process with Paula and Jerry.

Many people read some or all of the chapters and gave feedback on clarity, style, flow, or typographical errors. These generous volunteers include: Amanda L., Anne H., Arwen, Beth, Carmela (Serpent), Carol W., Caryn Stardancer, Craig, Chris M., Dave N., Diane T., Don, Elissa, Eric and Jeff, Galen, Jivannii, Joe, Kathy L., Lisa, Martha, Mary, Mickey, Nick, Paul T., Sara, STella, Sunny, Teal, Terry, Tory, and Weaver.

Finally, thanks to my friends, who put up with my moods from start to finish, and to my daughters and sons-in-law, who all said, "Go for it." And to my grandchildren, for reminding me through their innocence and vitality why we are fighting to stop ritual abuse.

Foreword

Chrystine Oksana

Although I do not subscribe to any organized religious group, I was raised a Christian and recall often hearing the prediction "the meek shall inherit the earth." I used to think it was an odd idea, given that the world I grew up in was ordered by power. It was and still is a world run by people who dominate others — physically, intellectually, emotionally, or economically. Those at the top of the power pyramid are often capable of the greatest violence. Violence has been tacitly tolerated for centuries by our society, and only recently acknowledged, as admitted in the shameful statistics on spousal abuse, child abuse, sexual abuse, and incest.

The extremes of violence practiced secretly in our society is called ritual abuse. Ritual abuse is methodical abuse, often accompanied by indoctrination aimed at breaking the will of another human being. The physical, emotional, and mental cruelty of ritual abuse knows no bounds.

I am a survivor of ritual abuse. It was through my own arduous yet awesome journey of recovery that I began to understand that prediction "the meek shall inherit the earth" in a new way. Perhaps my first encounter with the Grand Canyon may help to explain it.

Over twenty years ago, my friend and I set out to see the Grand Canyon. Upon arriving at its edge, we decided to take the five mile hike to a beautiful plateau which revealed a spectacular vista, with the Colorado river twisting in the gorge far below. It was late in the afternoon, and instead of hiking further down to the river, we turned back. We retraced the several miles across the plateau and then began our ascent up the steep canyon walls.

My friend and several other very fit, obviously seasoned hikers started up the steep grade of the path without breaking stride. Within seconds, they disappeared around the first bend. I was both impressed and surprised at their energetic pace. I knew there was no way that I could keep up, and so I took a deep breath and began the ascent at my own slow deliberate pace. Climbing up that steep

canyon was like climbing a ladder without rungs. Step after step I hoisted myself up, with each step growing more and more tired.

After about an hour, I noticed some of the hikers resting up ahead. As soon as they caught sight of me, they took off again. Another hour later, I noticed them resting at a tiny oasis. Once again, catching sight of me, they took off. As I approached the oasis, I thought that maybe I, too, should take a rest. I stopped to make my decision and had a startling realization. For the first time, I discovered how much pain I was really in. I hurt in spots I never even knew existed. It hurt to stand still, it hurt to straighten out, and it hurt to keep walking, so I just kept walking.

Half an hour later I saw the group of hikers resting ahead. This time they let me pass, and didn't move to overtake me. Now it was I who went around the turn and out of sight. It was four and a half hours since we started our return trek and there was no top in sight. Close to five hours into the climb, I realized that no one had passed me in a very very long while. Suddenly, out of nowhere, I saw the lodge just one turn of the path above me. Incredulous, I realized I was the first of the group to reach the top.

Things are not always what they appear to be. Survivors may not look or feel or act like those most likely to succeed in our society, but it is survivors who are transforming the consciousness of society. Each step in recovery, like each step up the Grand Canyon, is very, very hard. Yet each recovery step, no matter how seemingly minute, brings us closer to a planet where the power of love triumphs over the love of power.

I don't know why me and why now, but I do know that I am part of something much greater than myself. It's as if I can take no other path. I know that I will stay on this path no matter how long, or difficult, or solitary the climb. The strength which sustains me in the journey comes from my personal rhythm, and the source of that rhythm is my truth.

Truth gives each of us the courage to accept our own story. Courage is the telling of that story, as told by each survivor in this book. In telling your story, you are telling my story, and the story of countless others still caught in the cycle of abuse. Courage is gathering those stories and weaving them into an anthology, which stands like a tapestry bearing witness to our silenced truth. I thank and honor Jeanne Marie Lorena for her courage, dedication, and perseverance in seeing this project through.

I honor each person who has contributed to the making of this book. Each story has a profound impact on the world. Telling the story heals not only the storyteller, but everyone who hears it as

well. Stories have the ripple effect of stones sending waves through the pond. As each of us falls more into harmony with our own self, our relationships become more harmonious as well, and so what we spread is harmony, instead of conflict, in the world. Together we are working towards a world where every form of life is honored, where children are nurtured and guided, not dominated and punished.

Together we are moving towards the day when human kindness prevails over cruelty, the day when the meek shall inherit the earth.

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Introduction

Jeanne Marie Lorena

This is the book I wanted to read when I first realized I was a ritual abuse survivor. I was so hungry to meet people like myself, and I did not know how to locate them. I wanted to know if others had experienced what I had, if others had handled it the way I had, if anyone in the world could possibly understand me.

In time, I met other survivors and found some published accounts of ritual abuse experiences. But it took me four years to realize that if I wanted to see this book in stores, I had better stop waiting for somebody else to do it and get to work.

It has been a difficult task, from start to finish. A part of me was very reluctant to face the secrets of my childhood, because I had been threatened with death if I even thought about what I had experienced. The fear was intense and my lack of self-confidence was intense. Each step, soliciting manuscripts, editing the stories, writing the introduction, finding a publisher, was accompanied by primitive terror.

Another part of me knew that all over the world there were many hurt and isolated people like myself. I knew they would be grateful to know that there were others who had suffered as they had, others who had broken silence and lived to tell again and again. The desire to honor all survivors and bear witness to their experience conquered the fear.

What Is Ritual Abuse?

I define ritual abuse, in the broadest sense, as hurting people repetitively to achieve the goals of a religious, political, or social ideology. By this definition, wars are ritual abuse, racism is ritual abuse, beating children to make them behave a certain way is ritual abuse. The harm done may be hidden or obvious, subtle or extreme.

In a narrower sense, I define ritual abuse as the sadistic abuse of children and non-consenting adults to indoctrinate and coerce

them into a secret society or religion. Anything the human mind can imagine, including deceit, physical and sexual assault with extreme sadism, terrorist tactics, and criminal behavior, can be and is used to break people's wills and control their actions.

The stories in this book depict ritual abuse in its narrower sense. None of the abuse described was socially sanctioned, and all was performed in secrecy. One story describes ritual abuse confined within the family setting, but all the others describe groups of people meeting in secret to avoid detection.

In the United States, ritual abuse has come to be synonymous with satanism in many people's minds. Several of the stories printed here describe the practices of groups that embraced non-satanic ideologies and customs. It is the illegal and abusive actions that should command our attention, not the particular ideology used to rationalize or justify the atrocities.

Background

Throughout the history of humanity, people have tried to understand and master pain, suffering, and death. Every religion, every philosophy, every culture, struggles with these concepts.

In many cultures, rituals involving sex, pain, or ritual animal and human sacrifice are (or were until recently) accepted as natural and sacred by the majority of people. Caesar's Gallic Wars describes the burning alive of criminals and prisoners of war by Druidic priests to ensure crop fertility. Native American initiation ceremonies often involved ordeals that were painful or life-threatening. In some parts of India, wives are still expected to immolate themselves on their husbands' funeral pyres. Sexual license was an integral part of springtime agricultural festivals throughout Northern Europe, and the custom survives today in some parts of the world as Mardi Gras.

Groups of people have sometimes been forced to go underground and keep their existence secret in order to survive. Christians under the Roman Empire, non-Catholics during the Inquisition, Jews during the Second World War, all had to hide their beliefs to avoid death. These groups were routinely the target of libelous rumors and were accused of abusive religious practices in order to justify their persecution.

In Western Europe and much of North America, the popular belief is that practices involving group sex and human sacrifice died out well over a thousand years ago. Reports of their continuing existence are explained as hysteria on the part of unbalanced individuals or attempts to slander a targeted group. People

generally believe that isolated disturbed individuals may commit atrocities, and that some groups take the law into their own hands at times for political, financial, or racial reasons, but that secret, organized groups carrying on these traditions do not exist.

And yet the authors in this book, and hundreds of thousands more men, women, and children, have personal knowledge that these practices have survived and are occurring today. They deserve to be heard and taken seriously.

For Ritual Abuse Survivors: Caution

If you are a ritual abuse survivor, or if you suspect you might be, the stories in this book may be upsetting. Part of you may be reassured that you are not that different from others who have lived through ritual abuse and emerged with intact humanity, while another part of you may be terrified and panicked.

You may experience flashbacks, gain new information about your own past, or be triggered into self-destructive urges. At times you may feel like hurting or killing yourself, getting drunk or high on drugs, or attacking people you believe have hurt you (or even people who are trying to help you). You might also find yourself denying that such things are possible, and wanting to go back to people or situations that are harmful to you. On the other hand, you might feel shock or numbness, as if the words on the page had no meaning.

All of these are natural first reactions. They may come all at once, or one after the other, in waves. The feelings that cause these reactions are easier to bear if you are prepared for them, and if you keep reminding yourself that they are natural. Please take every precaution to keep yourself from being overwhelmed by these strong feelings and urges as you read the stories. Enlist the help of your therapist (if you have one) and other trusted people in keeping yourself safe.

If you start to feel overwhelmed, I suggest that you put the book aside. You can always come back to it when you feel calmer. If any part of you is reluctant to read further, trust that part, and explore your fears before continuing. If you read the stories through in one sitting, you will probably become confused and be unable to sort out which sections are meaningful to you. It is better to read a little at a time and allow yourself time to have your thoughts and feelings,

If you have multiple personalities, please pay attention to the wishes of all personalities that are currently communicating. Are parts of you too vulnerable to learn of others' experiences right

now? Can your helper personalities effectively protect your more frightened parts? Each alter's feelings and opinions are important.

If you read the book at your own pace, in safety, it should be a source of strength and hope. The experiences described are horrifying, but each author escaped, told, and is living proof that healing is possible.

For Readers Who Have Not Been Ritually Abused

I hope that many readers will be family or friends of ritual abuse survivors or professionals working with survivors, as well as people who have never met a survivor but whose hearts are large enough and whose social consciences are developed enough to want to know how people endure the extremes of human cruelty.

You may find that you have many of the same reactions as survivors do, despite the difference in background. You may swing between incredulous disbelief or numbness and strong fear or anger. This is natural. It means that you have the empathy necessary to put yourself in somebody else's shoes and the courage to allow yourself to imagine what it must have been like for them to suffer ritual abuse. In feeling another's suffering, you share to some extent in their trauma.

About Memory

Survivors, as well as people who have never been abused, frequently question the literal truth of abuse memories, especially those that have been forgotten. Few people get access to their abusers' diaries or find other outside confirmation of their memories. Given the nature of ritual abuse, it is little wonder that most survivors are often met with disbelief and denial if they tell of their experiences.

Remember that memories of childhood abuse are a record of a terrified child's best effort to figure out what is really happening. Children don't have the experience or logical skills to interpret events as clearly as adults do. Fear, pain, and drugs also cloud a child's ability (and an adult's ability, for that matter) to assess a situation accurately.

Part of becoming adult is reviewing what we remember and reinterpreting its significance. Were we tricked into believing something that wasn't true? Did we misinterpret? Have we condensed two events into one, believed another's interpretation of events, taken a fantasy literally?

Children are lied to and told fantasies all the time, and they believe the lies until they have a chance to examine them. How many people have said, "I had a happy childhood; we always had

food on the table," and have ignored clear evidence of deprivation, neglect, or beatings until others question them? How many adults remember believing in Santa Claus? The collection, codification, and interpretation of memories is a normal on-going process and an integral part of maturation and growth.

I am intensely unwilling to believe that human beings are capable of inflicting such cruelty on others, and I share the universal human desire to view my family and community as kind and loving. But, given all the evidence, I must reluctantly accept that I was treated with contempt and sadism. If it wasn't ritual abuse, how did I learn all these methods of torture? Who taught me the ideology that glorified pain and death? I wish I could find another explanation, but none seems plausible.

I realize that not all my memories are literal truth; some, in retrospect, seem to be staged events that I believed were real at the time. I probably never will know if any one particular memory is totally accurate, or whether I was deceived in whole or in part. I might also be remembering threatening scenarios that adults described so vividly that I was convinced they had happened.

But only ritual abuse explains the knowledge I had as a very young child of bizarre sexual acts, certain 'magical' rites and beliefs, animal and human anatomy. Only ritual abuse explains my pain, my symptoms, the damage to my heart. This is my truth: I do not like it, but I must live it.

The Authors

The writers come from all walks of life and many different backgrounds. Most of them are from the United States or Canada, because I sought stories through survivor organizations. There are more resources for survivors in North America than in other parts of the world, so North Americans are over-represented. Since most survivor organizations are designed by and for women, men are also under-represented in this collection.

Each author wrote under a pen name (except Claudia Mullen, Dr. Jonker-Bakker, and Dr. Jonker) and disguised people and locations to avoid identification. Some people were afraid of retaliation if they were identified. Others wanted to publish under their own names, but could not, because of the threat of law suits. Although the identifying details are disguised, the authors are telling the truth as they experienced it.

Some of the contributors told me that writing their stories was the hardest thing they had ever done. They had absorbed the knowledge bit by bit but were stunned to see it all in one place. Some also said that in bearing witness to their suffering, they

found added meaning in their lives. Knowledge of the past could be used to help others, and current healing could be shared in the hopes of empowering others.

All of the writers have enriched my own life. I have borrowed bits of their courage, and their experiences have helped me through some of my own dark days. I am deeply grateful to each person.

I Did Not Elect This Mutism

g & c

Tracy is the friend I trust enough that I can talk with her about writing, or about not being able to write. "Well," she said tonight, "what are you most afraid to write about? That's what you should write about."

My response was automatic: "But, but, but — "

"Can you remove yourself from it?" she asked.

It took me until now to laugh. Of course I can remove myself from it; I can remove myself from anything. That's what multiplicity is all about, and if it weren't for the ritual abuse I wouldn't be multiple at all.

But when I think of telling, of writing it, a muttering rises from the ones I can hear, the me's whose voices weren't taken away. "You're not supposed to tell. You don't want to get into that. You're not supposed to tell. Can't you think of anything else to write about? You're not supposed to tell. No one will believe you. You're not supposed to tell. You can't tell. You can't. You can't."

And it's true; I can't write about the church just yet. Today I can write only of my intention to write, and even this is more than I was taught to dare. I was three when my voice curled in on itself and settled into a deep, still sleep that remained unbroken for nearly twelve years. But I am twenty now and wide-eyed awake; my words are alive again and pressing to be named.

And I will write it someday; I will tell. I will write in words that people will not be able to look away from, words no one will want to look away from. Someday I'll stand up and say, "Look at me! I'm strong and alive and unafraid and I have something to tell you; I won't be quiet anymore."

I've finally found my words and I will not lose them again.

Letter to Jeanne Marie

Sandra Cohen

Dear Jeanne Marie:

Your notice lies before me on my desk. It was sent to me by my physician, who has treated me for years for health problems that I still experience as a result of childhood ritual abuse.

I have a wonderful therapist and many, many supporters. I have enjoyed the fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous and my fifteen years of sobriety. I have led a happy and successful life, but it has been very difficult.

For safety reasons, I must write under a pseudonym. I wish I could tell you all about myself and reveal my true identity. I want to cry out from the mountains and in the wild places where I now live, "I'm alive! I survived this! I know how to love and be loved! They didn't win!" But my particular case has been under the investigation of three different police departments, and I will probably never be truly safe until my whole family is dead. And so, even to you, Jeanne Marie, I must remain anonymous.

And so I wait. The lone survivor of a concentration camp. My concentration camp had no barbed wire, no guards patrolling the premises, no gas chambers. My concentration camp looked like a normal middle-class dwelling. Yet from the time I was four years old, when my mother first became involved with a faith healer from a fundamentalist Christian sect (which later degenerated into a satanic cult with Nazi overtones), I never knew from one day to the next if I would, in fact, survive.

I learned to endure sexual abuse from multiple perpetrators (some of them 'respectable' members of society) and physical torture when I didn't comply; locked in cupboards, my fingernails ripped out, starved, drowned, buried, given electric shock, and so on. I will spare you the details of why those who knew I was being abused did nothing, or next to nothing, to help me, and how repeatedly I was punished by the outside world for 'telling lies.' These things do not matter now. What matters in the present is

that I am finally believed, and now I can use my experience to help others.

The tortures I underwent were routine procedures, although they were done selectively in deserted places in the remote northern parts of one of Canada's provinces. A few of the incidents happened in a large city.

When I was thirteen, I was punished for trying to fight back during a satanic wedding ceremony. I was being forced to have sex with the leader. I was drugged, but I managed to kick him and throw up on him. As punishment, I was strapped onto a table much like an examining table in a doctor's office. A satanic symbol was branded on my cervix. I wore that brand for years, and finally, when it was discovered I was sterile due to scar tissue, I had a complete hysterectomy and the scar was finally out of my body.

How did I survive? Why did I survive? These are questions I still ask myself. I am almost forty years old now, and a successful psychologist. But still the nightmares and the sorrow and the anger come.

Through the loving intervention of my therapist over the years, I have let go of any guilt about my specific actions in the cult, save for one. There is the deepest sorrow within me that I survived when others didn't. One of my friends once told me, "Sandra, you survived to bear witness."

But I do not want that job. I have never wanted it. I was no better, no worse, than those children and adults who perished in the cult. (I know that a number of the deaths were probably faked, but I also know that some were real.) I have tried very hard to reach out to others in my therapeutic work, to do the best I can for those that suffer, but it is not enough. It will never be enough.

Yet in my darkest hours I knew I had to survive. I recall reading Victor Frankl's book *Man's Search for Meaning*, in which he discusses the fact that those who survived the concentration camps best never lost their ability to love and be loved and to see beauty even in the midst of horror. His book has been the mainstay of my life, and I have clung to his words that once we know "Why we suffer, we can bear almost any How." I know why I am here. To bear witness, even though such witnessing is not a path I would have chosen for my life, if I had had a choice.

My primary abuser was my mother. She started sexually abusing me when I was about three years old. The abuse got really bad when I was four and she became involved with the cult leader. At that time, she began wearing a voodoo/gorilla-type mask whenever she abused me in a cult setting. Later, I would pretend

that it was a monster named Kazar; that way I would not have to face the stark reality of the abuses my mother inflicted on my body.

During the period when my mother was becoming involved with the cult, a ceremony took place at a deserted farmhouse in the north of Canada. I was made to stab the bodies (or what looked like the bodies) of three children. After I was starved and beaten, the cult leader held his hand over my hand, which was gripping a knife, and had me mutilate these bodies by cutting an upside-down cross on each of them.

At this ritual, I split into three separate people. Sandra remained the intellectual, in control, memorizing all the horrible things that were happening to her and to others. Cara took all the pain and anguish of the abuse, and Miranda held all the rage towards her offenders. These three personalities were what helped me to survive.

I want to stress that if it had just been myself and my personality splits, I would not have survived. But there was Someone always loving and caressing me. One time, when they were trying to drown me in a well, I met Her. I was about six then. They must have held my head down under water for too long, because suddenly it seemed as if I slid out of the bottom of a slide and I was in a beautiful sunlit meadow.

It was the most beautiful meadow in the world, this secret special place of my heart. I entered its luminosity, and surrounding me were rocks and flowers and birds and warmth. There were not even trees to hold me in, just tall steadfast rocks protecting me like a fortress.

And there was this being, full of light, like an angel. This being engulfed me in her spirit arms and spoke to my heart. It was as if she said to me, "Sandra, beloved child, you are loved and one day you will have a beautiful life if you follow the light. When you are grown up, your world will be full of sunshine and love. Now you are in pain, but you must survive, dear one, and I will be with you always."

I remember the angel being telling me I had to go back to the well. I did not want to go, but she gently guided me. I remember choking as I became aware again of my abusers holding me down underwater. But I endured, because from then on I knew I would never be left alone again.

There is something of great importance that I have to tell you. It was many years before I was believed and adequately protected from my parents by the proper authorities. Because of the danger,

I had to live in remote parts of the country. This suited me well, as I feel safe in small places where I know everybody.

A number of years ago, I was being flown in a bush plane to one of the most remote areas of Canada. As I traveled further and further North in the small plane, I watched the tree line disappear. As the plane flew further away from civilization, there was a beautiful sunset cascading about the landscape, which resembled the Grand Canyon. I had the strangest sense of *déjà vu*. I looked out the right window of the plane and there — below me was my meadow — the meadow of my mind and heart — the meadow where I'd gone on numerous occasions as a small child in order to escape the abuses. The meadow that stretched out below me in the bird's eye view from the plane was identical to my inner meadow with rocks and flowers and no trees to hold me in; just light, a warm spiritual healing light!

I have stayed in the North because of that light and because of the special healing I have found in my work with Native peoples. I feel at one with them. I feel at home. I no longer want to live anywhere else. I am finally at peace.

I have something else very important to tell you. Because my sense of spirituality has been so increased by my association with aboriginal peoples and the land, I was able to disclose to the police all of my family's actions. I was believed and supported and respected. As an indirect result of my disclosures and the on-going investigation into my family's actions, I have met another survivor from the same cult. We talk and correspond regularly, and it is as if we were sisters in spirit. I am no longer alone! Also through my professional work and through my therapist, I have met other high-functioning ritual abuse survivors. This has given me great joy.

Most important of all, I can use my experience to help others. I talk to other survivors of ritual abuse and tell them that healing is a very long process, but it is entirely possible. I am fully integrated now into one person, and have been for several years.

The bottom line for me was that I was not going to let my offenders win. I draw on two lines I remember, one from the book *Biko* by Donald Woods, who quotes the martyred black South African activist as saying, "Once you know that all they can do is kill you, you don't need to be afraid anymore." And the words from *The Courage to Heal* by Laura Davis and Ellen Bass, "sometimes the best revenge is living well."

Because of that guiding force within me that comes from my angel protector, I will never be the kind of person who turns away

from another's pain. In fact, the greatest pain I bear in my present life comes from encountering others who do turn away from those who are suffering. It seems they have lost that special sense that we are connected one to the other.

Perhaps that is why I am most at home in the communal atmosphere of aboriginal surroundings. Native people, particularly in the remote areas of Canada, have always had an Awareness that we all depend on one another. And in that Awareness is Love.

I thank you for your time.

With love,
Sandra Cohen

Bad Girl

Eleanor

Once upon a time there was a little girl who did not want to be born. She wanted to stay in heaven and be happy. God wanted her to get born and he was angry because she did not want to obey him. When god is angry he gets real mean.

He said, OK, I'll teach you to obey. You'll be sorry you wanted to be happy.

So he sent her down to be born into a family of satanists. Remember all she wanted was to be happy. Ha ha. They taught her to obey by making her choose between things. If she obeyed the first time she was unhappy. If she disobeyed, she got to be ten times as unhappy. It was her choice, you see.

They made her hurt animals and babies. They made her kill animals and babies and eat their warm hearts. None of this made her happy at all. All this was god's idea because she did not want to leave heaven and live a normal life, sometimes happy, sometimes unhappy, with a normal family. God sent her to the satanists the way people send puppies to obedience school.

The satanists commanded her to forget each thing she did or learned until the next ritual. So during the day she did not know that they were satanists and killers and that she was one too. She did not know why she was so much more unhappy than the other children, why she could not love or play or have fun.

She tried very hard to be good and do the right things all her life and kept looking for a little happiness but she never found it.

Finally when her family died they went to heaven and told god what they had done. God was very happy with the good job they did in teaching the little girl to be obedient. He hugged the satanists and praised them and let them be proud and happy.

But after they were dead for a while she disobeyed again and remembered what had happened. She could only remember little by little because it was so hard and scary to disobey. To her surprise, she did not have to kill anything when she disobeyed and

remembered; she was just terrified, but that was nothing new. It was also hard to remember all the people and animals she had tortured and killed because she did not like pain either for herself or for others.

She is still alive so she does not know what god will do next. She guesses he is mad at her family because they didn't do such a great job after all. She guesses he will be very mad at her when he learns that she is still not obedient and still wants to be kind and happy. She wishes god wanted people to be nice to life and not care about obeying. She wishes god liked freedom and gentleness and beauty more than obedience. But she is just a little girl and she cannot change god.

I Couldn't Leave the Abuse Behind

A Grandmother

I was born in a British city a few years before the Second World War. I lived there until my early twenties, when I married and moved to Canada with my husband. That is how I got away from my abusers. I was a medical student in those days, but I immediately gave up my education when I married to become a homemaker. At the time, that didn't seem the least bit strange to me.

I now know that I was born into a transgenerational cult that had emigrated from Ireland to the United Kingdom a generation back. My father was a teacher and very involved with the Catholic parish where his school was located. He spent a lot of time there and ran the youth club and the church choir. Many members of my father's family, the parish priest, our doctor, and other parishioners took part in those evil rituals, and my mother sometimes joined them. But for over half a century I buried those facts in the deepest parts of my subconscious mind.

The cult practiced satan worship, taking Christian beliefs and rituals, turning them inside out in disgusting ways. They desecrated church vessels with body secretions and other revolting things. Worst of all, though, was what they did to human beings.

Twice in my life, those deeply buried memories tried to emerge from my subconscious mind. The first time was when I was nearly thirty. We had four small children. My husband was spending a lot of time at his new job and I felt lonely and abandoned, but it simply didn't occur to me to complain.

I knew that my childhood hadn't been ideal. My family was strange, especially my father. When we left Britain, I was puzzled that I felt nothing when I parted from my parents, only a curious numbness, a sense that I should be feeling something. I also knew that there were huge gaps in my memory. I could remember some early traumas: our house had been bombed in the war; I had been separated from my parents when I had scarlet fever; and I had

fallen and knocked out my front teeth. The only sexual abuse I knew about concerned a voyeuristic neighbor who paid me with candy to pull up my dress and pull down my panties so that he could look. I knew that I had been a very imaginative child, often inventing stories to amuse my little sisters. But I didn't even suspect the existence of the many personalities that lived inside me.

Perhaps my loneliness reminded some of my personalities of the abuse that they had experienced when I was little. Perhaps my overseas family tried to trigger me to return to cult life. Whatever the reason, I began to experience intense flashbacks. Other personalities began to speak and act out. I/we 'saw' our elderly neighbors as abusers from the past and began to yell obscenities at them. Sadly, as I have since learned, I acted out some of my abusive past on at least one of my little children. I was 'out of it' completely, and my bewildered husband took me to the psychiatric department of the local hospital.

That was in the sixties, and no one seemed to understand about childhood abuse or repressed memories then. I was given a psychiatric label, was heavily drugged and given thirteen electroshock treatments, even though I had an extreme terror of electroshock. For days I was curled in a fetal position, catatonic. The doctors could not predict whether I would ever come out of it.

But I did. Very slowly, I dragged myself back to what I felt was half a life. I came home and learned again how to take care of my children. My husband was more supportive. I got more help. Gradually, I weaned myself off the pills, which seemed to add to my heavy depressed feelings. Life supposedly returned to normal, but inside, I knew that something was very wrong. I went on living, but I was numb. It felt as if I wasn't there. There were no more signs of other personalities. They and the abuse that they remembered had been totally suppressed again, and remained so for another twenty years.

Life went on. I did a good job of raising my children; very good, considering what I now know about my own upbringing. They grew up, went to university, got jobs, found partners. I stayed with my husband. Our marriage became (and still is) very comfortable. I got a job and did well at it for seventeen years, rising up in the organization. I also stopped going to church and became very bitter towards the Catholic Church.

I had very little contact with my parents, though we exchanged infrequent stilted letters to keep up with the family news. There were very occasional visits. I did visit my mother a few months before she died and have some happy memories of that. Later on, I

planned a visit to my dying father, but he relapsed suddenly and died before we arrived.

As we became more affluent, I began to enjoy coming home from work to a relaxing drink before supper. That one drink became two or three, often topped up when no one else was in the kitchen. Quietly, I got rid of the many empties. I came home to lunch so that I could drink, and I bought vodka to hide at work.

Time went by. Sometimes I enjoyed the way that alcohol made me feel, and at other times I was acutely aware that I was in deep trouble. One day I went to the basement at work to sneak some vodka. I felt very desperate about my drinking and I prayed the agnostic's prayer, "Oh God, if there is a god, please help me to stop drinking."

One evening, soon after that anguished prayer, I told my husband about my excessive drinking. The next morning, I went into work, took the half-empty vodka bottle to the washroom and emptied it in the basin. I walked into the office of the Employee Assistance Counselor and said, "I seem to have developed a drinking problem." Following his suggestion, I joined an organization which has helped alcoholics all over the world, and I have not needed to drink since that night nine years ago.

In that way I began the healing journey that has taught me why I felt so numb inside and how to recover from the many wrongs that have been done to me. My journey has taken many turns since then, involving great effort on my part, but I have never doubted that it has been worthwhile. I am able to look back and see the tremendous gains that I have made, even though there is still work to be done.

For a couple of years I concentrated on recovering from alcoholism. During that time, I learned about dysfunctional families and recognized the patterns in my family of origin. I now understood that my father was very rigid in his religious beliefs and imposed his way of thinking on the whole family. He was moody, morose, and angry, and he was an alcoholic. I realized that I had been very afraid of him. If I looked back at my childhood, it seemed as if my mother just wasn't there. In fact, she took sleeping medicine, was still asleep when we left for school, and dozed off after lunch every day.

One day, my counselor asked whether my father had ever behaved inappropriately towards me. She said, "Did he treat you (emotionally) more like a wife than a daughter? I don't mean whether he ever touched you." I told her that I was always chosen to be my father's companion, in some ways taking the place of the

son he never had. Then I added, "But don't rule the other out!" I knew that I was referring to incest. But the strange thing was that I had no memory of that; in fact, I thought it had never happened to me. My reply surprised me. I wondered where that remark came from.

My counselor tried to put me back in touch with my feelings as a child. For instance, she suggested that we sit on the floor because that is what children do. Then she suggested another technique that has become very important to me ever since. She gave me a pencil and paper and asked me to write a letter to my inner child using my left hand (I usually write with my right hand). My inner child is the child that I was, the innermost and most alive part of me, a little girl that I didn't even know existed. I tried it and was amazed to see my hand write:

"Poor little girl. Your life may have started out OK but it was all bombed away. You were given fear instead of childhood, you were to learn nightmares instead of joy. What a sad, sad thing for you. I wish I could hold you and comfort you, especially in the nights, those terrible nights. I'm so sorry that night was so frightening for you when it can be a soft, lovely dark to enjoy. Little girl, I am going to lead you into the light."

I asked that little girl within me to reply to my letters, and she did. I felt her sorrow and loneliness and a despair that nothing or no-one could save her. It seemed as if she could cry "Help!" forever and no one would ever hear. I felt strangely moved, very gentle and motherly toward her, and it occurred to me that I had heard her, and I could write back to her.

We wrote steadily back and forth. We spent long, seemingly timeless hours reliving childhood events. We kicked and screamed in pain, sobbed in loneliness and abandonment, and shivered in fear. We began to feel stronger. In our daily lives, we began to have feelings and to recognize them.

One area that seemed worth working on was the continued doubt about sexual abuse by my father. I thought that I must be mistaken. This man was a school teacher who did lots of charitable work. He was obsessed with religion! How could my suspicions be correct? I discussed this with my inner child. She was very clear:

"It WAS DAD. It was, it was. Really. I felt like I didn't believe it. It's the hot confused feeling. I used to love him. He held me so much. He came in the dark, and he put his penis down there, and it hurt so I couldn't bear it. And I screamed so he stopped. I can't. Help, help, help me. Help me, please."

So now I knew about the incest. (Of course, I still had doubts at times.) Right from the start, it made sense of my terror of my father, the fact that he seemed to loom so large in my mind, and the curious numbness when I parted from him. I learned that a very painful rectal prolapse that I'd had as a child was because of rectal abuse. I remembered the frequent soreness and itching of my anus and vulva and the cold cloths my mother gave me to soothe those areas. I remembered the choking sensations of oral sex. I began to suspect physical abuse from both of my parents. My inner child told me of the time my father smashed my baby teeth, then took me to the dentist to have them extracted and made me lie and say I fell on the vacuum cleaner.

I wrote about incest to one of my sisters. She was shocked but not surprised. She had watched TV shows about sexual abuse and had thought of our father as just the right candidate to be an abuser. She had no memories of being abused herself, but she gave me some confirming information about my own memories.

When it was time, my personalities started to reveal themselves. In dreams, I came to know that there was a tiny baby, scarcely alive, frozen in time. During meditation one day, I felt that her eyelids were beginning to flutter, perhaps they were about to open. Around that time I made a drawing of a very young child without eyes but with tears pouring down her cheeks. It symbolized that I could now cry, but I could not yet see what I needed to see.

In the months that followed, many of my personalities became known to me. Sometimes, I woke up 'knowing' one; sometimes I dreamt about one. I met the boy who spoke with a corny Irish accent. It was his job to defiantly take my mother's angry outbursts and the physical abuse that accompanied them. I met the adolescent redhead who enjoyed sex because she had been told to like it. I met tough, delicate, and timid children, and learned of a tiny autistic baby deep inside us. I also met adults. There is an inner baby sitter and Raging Imbecile (I was called 'imbecile' as a child and associated the word with behavior that my father didn't like.) He was a very useful acquisition to our inner family because he could get REALLY REALLY MAD! He still does — especially in therapy!

As we came to know more of us, we occasionally went in fantasy into various deep and wonderful caves. In those magical settings, we would interact to solve some problem that had come up. We discovered this technique months before any therapist suggested 'inner group therapy' to us.

I began to think of myself as The Healer in addition to being the one who normally interacts with the outside world. With that concept came an increasing sense of personal power and of self. I began to believe what one feminist therapist had been telling me for some time: that I am a strong woman! And I began to use my journals as the basis for writing a book about my own healing journey. As yet my book has not been published, but is still under consideration and has had favorable comments from some publishers. I am able to live comfortably with the thought that it will be published when the time is right.

Knowing a lot of our inner people allows me to notice some patterns. Often someone had the role dealing with a specific type of abuse. As such, they carried the memories associated with that type of abuse or they held a specific emotion. There were also helpers to comfort inner children or sing them to sleep when things got too painful. Sometimes our personalities occur in pairs, the one complementing the other. Such pairs may have been formed at the same time so that one would provide whatever the other lacked.

I discovered some strange personalities that I called Primitives, because they didn't seem to be complete people to me. One of these, the Black Priest, represented the heavy oppressive aspects of my rigid religious upbringing. Another, Gangjai-a, represented the silence which had been forced upon me. Mam-dad expressed my parents' critical voices inside my head.

I became aware of a comforting voice that often spoke to me at dawn who had uplifting and perceptive things to say. I named her Dawn and began to write to her. I quickly learned that she had a very important role: she knew about everything that had happened! She was also wise enough to point out that I could not know all the memories yet; I would have to be patient and learn them at a rate that was safe for me. After all, I didn't want to be overwhelmed like that last time, when I had landed up the mental hospital.

Nonetheless, I was having more (and worse) memories around that time. They had such a bizarre quality that I had great difficulty in believing them. Or rather, I believed them, then I'd switch to an outsider's point of view, and they would seem too weird for words. Here's one example from my journal:

I wrote, "I want you to know that it's always OK for you to tell me anything that happened, my little lovely." A child named Molly wrote back, "Okey Dokey. Daddee told me I was a dirty gurl. He was very mad at me. He put a little froggee in that hole. Not where I go job. Not where I weeewee. You knows it. The froggee hurtid me a lot cause it floppid about. I didn't like that. But Daddee laffed. Then

reelly I went away. But I heard him telling her she was a very dirty gurl. He sed it lots an lots of times. And I went up on the mantelpiece and I turned into a very still statchoo."

As she wrote, I felt her feelings. They included fear of disclosing, shame and disgust at what he did, pain, concern for the frog, pride at the accomplishment of escaping by becoming a statue. From there, she had watched him rape the little girl on the bed.

Then there was the evening when someone had burned incense in our home. That night I woke just before first light. The incense smell had triggered a memory of multiple abusers in the sacristy of the church adjacent to my father's school. (The sacristy is the room to the side of the altar where the priest puts on his vestments. It always smelled faintly of incense.) I knew that I had stared hypnotically at a church candle while being raped by three men. I could not get those faces out of my mind: my father, the parish priest, and another parishioner, a man who had always given me the creeps.

As I lay awake one morning, Dawn said (in my head), "Consider that your father might have been one of a group." As soon as she spoke, I was filled with a flood of feelings. I was amazed. I was horrified. And I was relieved. The knowledge that my father was a member of a cult made total sense of all the bizarre recent discoveries and of some other strange things that I had always known.

I met more and more members of my inner family, some of whom frightened me very much at first. I learned that they are cult-induced personalities. They always introduced themselves as angry, loud, and abusive towards me. Their voices, coming out of my mouth, were so strange that I became afraid that I was possessed by evil spirits. However, I have learned that they too are part of us. They have been involved in the worst abuses and have seen or done terrible things because they were forced to do so. At heart they are not evil. They are frightened little children who had to act as if they were big and cruel. They acted like that to protect us, and if they hadn't, we very probably would have been killed. I have learned to love these little ones deeply and unconditionally. Under the sunlight of my love, they melt into brave sad little people. In spite of their deep fear, they cooperate and tell on the evil doers.

What have these terribly abused children told me? When I/we were little, we were taken at night to various locations. (Even though it was wartime, some cult members had legitimate reasons to drive cars at night.) One of the locations was the school at which

my father taught. Another was the large waiting room outside a doctor's office. At other times it was an outdoor location.

Then there was my 'worst ever nightmare.' When I was a child I had this seemingly simple recurrent dream. I went into a long narrow room where shadowy figures surrounded a naked old lady in a bathtub. I 'knew' that every tooth in her head had been filled. That was all! But what terrible feelings accompanied that dream. I obsessed about it, imagining all that dental work (I have a phobia about dentists). I had an awful sense of foreboding and depression whenever I thought about it and was terrified to fall asleep in case I dreamt it again. That nightmare haunted me well into my adult years.

A few months ago, I understood why. Dawn told me "It was a flashback dream. That was why it was so horrible for you." Using my left hand, I conversed with Silly, who is a so-called brain-damaged part of us.

I wrote, "We said we'd come back to the source of my anger. Who would like to speak?" Silly answered, "I'm FURIOUS. I'M PISSING MAD!" "Good for you! Want to tell me about it?"

"Well, it's what they did to the old woman. I don't know who she is or where they got her from. She was in a bathtub. It was rusty and had peeling yellowish-white paint. It wasn't joined to anything. It had no water in it.

"THEY (THEM FUCKING BASTARDS) HELD HER HEAD BACK AND THEY PUT ACID IN HER MOUTH. IT SMOKED A LOT. SHE MADE HORRIBLE NOISES AND SCREAMS. THEY KEPT DOING IT. LOTS OF TIMES. Five times."

Then Saboteur, a cult-induced personality who now sabotages them by telling, wrote, "They said:

'Piss piss piss
Make the old woman hiss
Weigh weigh weigh
The weight of all she'll say
Note note note
What comes from out her throat.'

I hadn't heard about any such activity being done by abusive cults at that time. When I called a crisis line for help in dealing with the emotions that it brought up, the woman on the line said that she was quite familiar with bathtubs and acid being used; it was one way to get rid of a body. So, in addition to the consolation of connecting to someone who could listen to the gross stuff, I received confirmation that my experience was not unique. That has happened several times since then.

Like many of us ritual abuse survivors, I have been subjected to many types of torture. I have seen and participated in animal and human murders (both children and adults). I have been made to swallow things that are disgusting to swallow. I have been multi-raped many times and have had other sexual atrocities committed on me. I have been forced to hurt others, including my very own little sister.

Today, I read a lot about ritual abuse and I attend the workshops that are now available for people who, like me, have to deal with this kind of abusive past. I attend therapy weekly and sometimes meet with a friend for co-counseling. I call the local crisis line and I have long discussions with my daughters, who have been doing intensive healing work, too. I'm glad to be dealing with this at a time when there is help available and when I can see myself as part of a survivor movement that is raising consciousness about ritual abuse. I want to do my part by writing about my experience and by helping other survivors. I try to listen to the children inside and not to tell more than they are able to handle.

One of my delights is to be with my little grandchildren. Last winter, I built a huge dollhouse. I'm still working on the furnishings. It is there for my grandchildren to enjoy, but it is also there because I never had a proper dollhouse. My inner children can delight in it, even though they are a little shy about playing with it. We are no longer too shy to take a teddy bear to bed or to therapy if we need to do that.

My grandchildren are showing me what it is like to have a more normal childhood. The other day, the older little girl (she is six) was leaning against me as I read her a story. She remarked very matter-of-factly that breasts were kind of nice and soft to lean against. Then she went on talking about other things. I thought about how I was as a child. I couldn't have been natural about private parts of the body. And if I had made such a remark, it would have been met with embarrassment and extreme censure.

I can observe these things now and take delight in them. Ordinary things are very wonderful to me. And I take delight, too, in the way that I now react to situations that used to make me freeze and feel horribly confused or afraid. I can have disagreements with my husband, or ask him for support, and stay perfectly calm. I no longer have some inner unfounded terror that he will attack me or abandon me.

I enjoy nature and working in the garden. Even repetitive tasks, such as picking up maple seeds for hours on end, are times for reflection and letting peace into my soul. I do not feel the need to attend any religious establishment, but I am aware of the

spiritual side of my nature. I side with good and believe that helping to fight ritual abuse is an important way that I can do that. I am aware that I have been deeply scarred by depravity and evil, but I am also in contact with an inner innocence that stayed with me throughout the worst of the horrors. I feel more in touch with people, both within the healing community and outside it. I am very grateful for all those who have helped me, and continue to help me to recover. In some ways, I feel as if I am coming alive for the very first time.

Some concerns remain, however. What will happen to the multiple part of my nature? I used to worry a lot about that. Would we integrate? What would that mean to us? Now I know that we have already managed to do some very difficult things. We survived all of that abuse. We lived an okay adult life for many years, and now we are making a steady and successful recovery. So I believe in the process (power?) that is making that possible; directing it, perhaps, and I am content to let it go on doing whatever it has done successfully so far. Perhaps one day we will have the experience of thinking as and being one. Perhaps not. We are able to simply wait and see.

I also have to live with fear. Even though my abusers lived far away and many are now dead, I am still afraid when I break the silence that they imposed. Sometimes this takes the form of acute terror experienced by an inner little one. Sometimes I just worry if I am being incautious about what I write or say. Will they somehow hit back at me? But there is a very deep part of me that wants to tell the truth as I discover it and that doesn't even want to remain anonymous. I am facing those fears and I argue internally for disclosure. The secrecy, especially from ourselves, was so very, very wrong. I have a strong personal belief that we must try to counteract it, and that, by telling, we will be set free, perhaps even free from the fear itself.

A Small Spark, Wild As Lightning

Joy

It was a podunk little cult; two families and occasional hangers-on, nice, middle-class people. Ordinary. You couldn't guess the unpalatable secrets we locked up in silence and lies.

My father was the high priest. We had no high priestess. The other family's daughter was trained as high priestess until she was fifteen, when she failed some test or other. I then became the trainee, at nine, though I was involved in rituals from infancy.

Our small cult was affiliated with other satanic circles, though never intimately. We did rituals only very occasionally with a larger circle, to my ambitious mother's chagrin. She involved me in another cult, all women, possibly very loosely based on Wicca, as satanic cults are based on the Roman Catholic Church's liturgy and teachings. This was a much larger group, and most of the women, or their mothers or grandmothers, had grown up in Scotland, England, and Wales.

The men let the women do whatever they wanted, without interference, with two conditions: no boys or men could be involved in any way; and no killing. Only men were allowed that power, or women under the direct control of men. I remember no exceptions to these conditions.

Most of the activities in the women's rituals centered around sex. There was a great deal of female-only prostitution, invariably young girls sold to rich old women. My mother involved me with her friends before I learned to walk. Money changed hands by the time I was four.

Rituals not involving sex centered on torture, again of the young by the old, of the poor by the rich. I was tortured with electric shocks on all parts of my body (feet and genitals were the commonest), pricked with hypodermic and sewing needles, beaten with various implements (anything that didn't leave scars, or many bruises), raped with anything human or non-human that would fit inside me without causing obvious damage. Any orifice would do.

What I hated most were things stuck up my urethra, especially electric probes. I was always drugged, usually with Demerol.

My mother was a nurse at a large local hospital, and she was remarkably adept at stealing whatever she needed for rituals, including blood, syringes, body parts, still-born fetuses, Demerol, and other drugs. Her own peculiar wrinkle was feces, urine, and blood collected from hospital patients for testing. She took them home overnight and stored them in the refrigerator, then took them back to the lab the next morning. My family completely accepted, though with some grumbling, the shit and piss and infected blood of strangers in our refrigerator, next to the milk and eggs. I have no idea what she did with it, but it was not used in rituals.

My mother was unable to contain the shattering of her own childhood. She targeted me, her only daughter, because she hated herself, and all things female. She was determined to break me, partly from love ("Pain makes you strong. You can survive anything."), partly from hate ("Once I was younger and prettier than you. You'll never be as good as me."), partly from greed ("Such beauty. That face will make my fortune.").

My father was the salt of the earth, World War II veteran, elder in the church. He was kind and witty, liked and respected by everyone that knew him, loved by his children. As high priest, he called down dark like a cloak around him, magnificent, in control. Only inside the impenetrable walls of his rituals did he allow himself to rape and torture, to kill, to make us kill. Outside, such activities did not exist.

We needed secrecy like food. Once, I broke down the walls for a moment, when I was fifteen, and told him about a dreadful ritual my mother did to me when he was out of town. He threatened to kill me. "That never happened!" he thundered. "If you ever say it did, I'll kill you myself." I put my terror and loathing of him into a mental box, and loved him, as I always had, and put the walls safely back in place.

By age fifteen, I had been raped thousands of times, witnessed scores of murders, and killed at least two people myself. I had been tortured and threatened with death more times than I can remember. Like my father, I kept all ritual activities impenetrably secret, absolutely bounded. I never raped or killed or tortured anyone outside a ritual. Like my mother, I was shattered. Unlike her, I put myself back together again.

In the dark of my father's rituals, of my mother's rapes and beatings, I held onto a little light, just one small spark, wild as

lightning, secret of secrets. Light kept my mind free to know truth from lies, right from wrong, free to know kindness from inflicted pain.

Throughout my childhood I danced. From age five to fifteen I danced intensively, until my mother canceled all my dance lessons. The loss of that physical cleansing and meditation devastated me, but I was already formed, nearly grown, and that cellular knowledge of joy stays with me now, more than thirty years later. That cellular joy started my healing.

I stopped killing first. During an important ritual, at fifteen, I could not make my hand stab a knife into a three-year-old boy's heart. I tried three times, and I could not stab that child. I expected to be killed on the spot.

I wasn't killed. I was severely raped and beaten, dancing was taken from me, and a number of other ongoing punishments put in place, but I survived my body's cellular decision not to kill, and this life-long healing journey began.

At seventeen, I stood on the edge of suicide, and stepped back, because I knew I could stop being raped and beaten. I stopped the rituals slowly, from fifteen to around nineteen, and got rid of my mother's prostitution of me by eighteen. I did it by saying no. I disobeyed. I refused. I defined myself by what I would not do and stood up for myself, to the death. I expected to die every time I disobeyed or refused, and every time, I knew death was better. I'm very surprised to find myself alive now, and whole, if not completely healed yet.

My first NO! outside a ritual was the day after I decided, at seventeen, not to jump from a high window. My mother came rushing across the kitchen at me, furious about something, fists up, spit flying, eyes and hair wilder than her words. This time, I waited until she got to me, then stood up abruptly, looked her in the eyes, noses four inches apart, and said, so quietly, "If you ever hit me again, I'll hit you back. I'll hurt you more." She backed right off (coward) and, outside of rituals, never physically threatened me again.

One part of this healing journey happens when I write poetry. I write in sacred space, sacred time. I cry during this terrifying and arduous work, and I know I haven't finished if I am still in tears. When I read the poem and feel perfectly centered, perfectly grounded, with no urge to cry, with the sure knowledge of truth fully revealed, with no dark corners left unswept, then I know the poem is finished. This can take several intensive days, sometimes

weeks, and I always need another few days to read and reread it, contemplate it, search every nuance of every word, and cry again.

After writing, the next step is to go public. I start small: show the poem to my husband, therapist, and close friends, most of whom are poets and artists. I speak and read my poems in public, though up to now only about incest, not ritual abuse. Next step is publishing, and that's very hard. But here I am.

Recently I turned forty-seven. The morning of my birthday, in the middle of breakfast, I let out a sudden whoop, and started weeping and dancing, shouting, "I made it! I made it!" I wasn't supposed to live to see forty-seven. I was programmed to self-destruct at various ages if I hadn't gone back to the cults. Forty-six was the last age they programmed. I think they fully expected me to kill myself by seventeen, and the other ages were fail-safes they never thought would be needed; that I would rather obey than die.

The history of my childhood is grim and obscene. I've healed deeply, with my body's guidance, from its cellular decision not to kill, from these hands that hold paper and pen, feet that walk to podiums, mouth that tells, eyes spilling over, seeing anyway. But I haven't done it alone, and I can't complete the healing alone. I need the community of healers and healing and healed. I need love. I need to be free.

Love heals me the most; the love that bloomed between another cult child and me in a tiny rose window of opportunity, the deep-rooted ever-branching joy in my marriage, familial peace with friends, in poetry, talk, food, music, and sacred circles. Most especially I am healed in the love I give myself, which doesn't originate in me. I stand in the Light of that which is nameless, sometimes called Goddess, or God, the antithesis of everything my parents taught me. I can stand in this terrifying Presence for a minute now, instead of a couple of seconds.

The cults are out of my life, but I'm not completely out of their clutches. I'm still afraid they will kill me, torture me, make me insane. But the more public I am, the safer I am (anything they could do to me is already exposed, in my writing) though I don't feel safe enough yet to use my own name. This book helps. The more of us who stand up for ourselves and our children, and tell the world, "This evil stops with me!" the safer we all are.

I AM

Angelica

I have to prove what my body knows
but no one will believe
because it is too hideous.
Someone has made this up
pushed it into my veins
had me memorize it since I was an infant
my screaming my terror my rage
they are pretense
a story of missing pieces
fragmented pictures
sounds smells faint images
knowing, knowing in my body, knowing in my veins
my truth
my terror
my story
my healing.

I am forty, a lesbian, and second-generation Italian. My family was poor working class. My first clear memory of being a survivor of cult and ritual abuse occurred in 1991. I remember them on top of me, raping me. I was face down, tied and staked to the ground. My body pushed and screamed. I remember their hands — dirty, coarse, invading — their breath, their laughter and panting. I remember no faces, only eyes that were empty, boots, heavy and muddy, no bodies except covered. I remember screaming. "No stop no." I remember standing naked, my legs shaking while I was raped. I remember running and feeling my terror. Children and animals were skinned, bodies mutilated and burned. I was forced to consume flesh and blood, feces and urine. It was at night when they came. It began when I was an infant.

it is three a.m.
i wake
it is the witching hour
always the same
ever since my remembering
my healing

it is three a.m.
i wake
i lie breathing
small movements
toes, ankles
fingers, wrists
i breathe
and rise
screaming into my pillow
infant cries
of fear
of pain
of remembering
my body vibrates to my sound
starting at my crown
and following my spine down my back
into each leg, out my heels and toes
my energy moves
through my veins
out my eyes, my teeth, my fingertips
i breathe
and cry
and heal

it is three a.m.
i wake
i light sage, cedarwood
one white candle
scent and light fill me
anointing my wounds
water washes my body whole
i cry for my infant knowing
i sing for my spirit to rest

a ritual
healing

Cult and ritual abuse cannot occur unless we are cut off from the spirit, unless we fear the darkness and the light. Massage, transformational movement, writing, and art are paths I travel into my darkness, into my light. It was through my darkness that I found my light, a light to guide me through my fear and temper my great rage.

I lie
my body taut with memories
moving
my muscles and bones
vibrating sounds
smells
remembering
knowing

I move
into this rhythm
my rhythm
of remembering
and releasing

Opening
breathing
being
I cry
I laugh
I AM.

Joyous, Humble, and Thoroughly Outraged

John David

Hi! My name is John David and I am a ritual abuse survivor. Yippee for surviving!!!! Double yippee for escaping!!!! (What I'd like to say about the cult, however, is unfit to print.)

I have been surviving ritual abuse from the day I was born, almost forty years ago, and I am very practiced at it. I see survival as pretty normal; normal because this has always been my life, and normal because everyone is surviving something. I see ritual abuse survivorship as marvelous, with the rewards of finding amazing strength, courage, and ability within myself, meeting other beautiful people, and best of all, freedom.

To me, survivorship means being able to look after myself, for myself. From a safe place within me I can trust my feelings and my thoughts. I can work through the deception that the cult tries to impose and the memories of when I was abused. Finding the safe place is the trick. I have moved thousands of miles to be physically away from the cult, found safety with a counselor, found mentors, and made friends with fellow survivors.

The hardest part for me is explaining to my little ones that we are truly not guilty. I reassure them that when we were able to see that we were lied to, we escaped. I bring them into our safe place where we know instinctively that we do not ever want to participate in the lies, the crimes, and the perverse belief system the cult espouses.

I try to always keep part of me at my present age in order to evaluate situations, make decisions, and look after my younger parts and personalities. They need guidance, explanations, and to be told firmly not to act on programming. They need me to be their parent and an adult. I also try to remember that most of what fills my mind is memory. The torture and the programming are not happening now. I need to step outside myself and look at what's going on in the present and say 'stop' to the memories.

The torture I lived through was horrific, calculated, hidden, sadistic, invisibilized. The worst part was the creation through electroshock of dissociated personalities who were made to believe that they had killed my whole family. These personalities were unknown to me for a long time, and they were manipulated into doing cult jobs and into swearing allegiance to the cult. The viciousness of this deception still brings deep sadness. The memories of when I was abused in child and adult pornography and prostitution or when I was forced to be involved with organized killings are also excruciating. I go through a range of emotions from horror, incomprehension, nausea, outrage, and then finally acceptance and relief. This is the downside, the place I go in my memory to free myself from carrying around the pain.

The bright side of working through the memories is a feeling of great accomplishment. Seeing the sun after many rainy days is very bright and fulfilling. The physical aspects of the trauma are relatively easy to deal with; the hard part is trying to comprehend something that is essentially incomprehensible. My ability to survive this madness comes from simply feeling sad and expressing my outrage, from finding things in my life that are joyous, and from finding meaning in my place in society through education about ritual abuse.

I believe that humanity acts out of a huge sense of insecurity, and that ritual abuse is part of that continuum of panicked, destructive behavior. Wars and armies are about organized killing. Criminal organizations, like the Mafia, are private versions of armies. Child and adult prostitution and pornography are part of institutionalized sexual abuse. As ritual abuse survivors we sometimes feel alone, but many many others have been oppressed in very similar ways.

There is more to me, of course, than my background of cult abuse. I am also gay, male, Australian, and working class. I bring all of me to survivorship, and I have many needs that must be addressed.

A very important need is to eradicate the commonly held belief that men are solely to blame. The blame lies in cult doctrine. Little boys are victimized as horribly as little girls, and in the same numbers. By stereotyping men as perpetrators, society revictimizes men. Not offering support to men in healing reinforces their cult-induced guilt, making it more difficult for them to leave cult life and encouraging violent acting out.

The stereotype of gay men as pedophiles is also very destructive. Gay men are no more likely to abuse children than heterosexual men are. But this false belief stigmatizes us and cuts

us off from many resources available to heterosexual people. The positive aspect of being gay is that I define my own sexuality. I own it. My cult was homophobic, and I defy them by being true to my nature.

Working class people are also invisibilized, seen as second rate, treated as 'clients' instead of fellow survivors. Our dependency upon state or free counseling services means minimal choice and less possibility of fulfillment. On the other hand, I appreciate my down-to-earth attitude, the sense of solidarity with other working class people, and my heightened awareness of injustice and oppression. Working class people know from bitter experience that atrocities occur in their own neighborhoods, not only far away out in the bush. And they are willing to speak out about injustice.

In Australia, the feminist, men's, labor union, psychotherapy, and incest survivor movements, and particular individuals in powerful positions, have worked together to create a political climate of belief at the grass roots level. Virtually all government and religious counselors and community workers acknowledge the existence of ritual abuse. Many in the police, health department, government, and media (especially the working class media) do likewise. In New South Wales, a major government commission is investigating the extent of organized pedophilia, and we hope that the cults' involvement in child pornography will be exposed.

I was asked the other day how I felt about survivorship. I responded that I would not trade places with anyone. To be a survivor means that I have an immense knowledge of society and myself. This knowledge is a precious gift which brings me tears of joyous and humble satisfaction.

A Letter to My Children

Anne Hart

My dear children,

I'm writing you this letter because I want you to know me. Every night for five years now, you have asked me to tell you a story from my childhood. I try. You snuggle up cozily in your beds and I sit propped up at the end, a big pillow behind me, maybe a cat or a dog curled up between us. Your clothes are strewn around, and there are more toys than can be put away, so they never are. You like it that way. You crawl under the covers, then move back out into the cold air again to switch off the lights beside your beds.

Then you each say, every night, "Mom, tell me a story."

"What shall I tell you?" I ask.

"About when you were a kid," is the invariable reply. My heart fills up with love of you and then sinks again.

You see, dear ones, I can hardly remember my childhood. The few islands of memory on the pale sea of my amnesia are often not ones I want you to know about just now. That's why I am writing to you, so that later you can read this letter and understand. The secrets are the sickness. You need to know my secrets because you came out of my body and have inherited half my genes, half my history, and most of my time, energy, and love.

Finally a story comes to mind and I can begin. I tell you about lying backwards on my pony with a book on his broad dappled rump, my feet near his grazing head, my stomach on his flat warm back. The sunlight through the maples and birches makes more dappled patches. The grass is sweet and green from the frequent summer showers and my little world feels utterly peaceful.

Very little else from those days remains for me to tell you. I feel like the disc has been removed from the computer of my mind and all that comes to me is the silent whirring of tiny mechanisms, disconnected from the instrument. I simply can't recall vast quantities of my childhood. It frightens me, wondering why the screen is blank.

I do not want your bedtime story to be of the horrible images that came unbidden into my mind. A woman lying fully clothed with a gaping hole in her abdomen and men putting their penises forcefully into her wound. I don't want you to know my strange thoughts, of wondering if I could withstand being crucified, like Jesus, or if the weight of my body would tear my hands away from the nails. Nor do you need to know of my obsession with the Holocaust, and of how many different ways there are to torture and kill helpless people.

You need to know that I was ritually abused as a child, and this caused both my amnesia and the horrible nightmares and images. There are too many rituals to relate them all to you in this letter. My journal is in a safe place if you want to know more detail. It bears witness to the tortures, and to the deaths, of those who no longer can choose to speak. We survivors of this hidden Holocaust carry our tattoos on our souls, and my soul is in that journal.

Furthermore, you need to know this information in case you ever begin to suspect that such dreadful things could have happened to you. This is the reason I have dragged you to various professionals, so I could reassure myself that you haven't been abused too. I suspect you have been, and pray that I am wrong.

It feels like a series of fishhooks have been inserted into my heart and have abscessed for nearly half a century, pumping poison into my system night and day. The surgery required to extract the fishhooks is terrible. However, it is necessary and ultimately successful. If you have been hurt in the same ways that I have, you can find help and can heal, too.

This letter is also an attempt to tell you how profoundly sorry I am for anything that might have happened to you as a result of being born into transgenerational abuse. I can barely function when I think of how fragile and vulnerable you children are. I pray all the time that you are protected.

Before I started to heal, I may have been unable to protect you properly because I was psychologically blind and did not see your distress. And even if you were not abused as I was, I have been terribly affected by my past, most especially in my relationship with you. I have been overprotective. I have felt angry and fearful when you reached the ages I was during my trauma years. At times, I have felt even younger than you.

Even though I always wanted so much to mother you well, I know I couldn't have been any other way, or acted any differently. You need to know that I am the adult, and that I am therefore totally responsible for your distress from the many disruptions in

your lives. It was all due to my struggles with my past. It was never, ever, your fault.

It's hard to end this letter. I stare out the kitchen window at the trees. They still grow up towards the sun and it amazes me. I'm stunned at how you have grown and flourished despite the chaos in your lives and the unenviable challenge of living with me as I go through chilling memories, brought to my knees with pain many days and nights.

The rain still falls in the winter; in the spring the grass will grow again, and the pale green leaves grow back on the willow tree. The stars are always in place. The moon is a sliver some nights, round on others. When it is full, I pray especially hard because I know what happens on nights like that.

I don't understand my creator at all, but I guess that is not up to me. I am just supposed to do His will. I hope that it is His will that I tell you of my past, and of my love for you, and of the reason why your childhood has been hard and confusing. I hope it is His will for me to speak out, even though the cult may try to retaliate in an attempt to stop my witnessing to the horror. And as I pray to do His will, I just keep living my life and going to work and taking care of you, my children, as best I can.

I love you,
Mom

We Are All Related

Two Bears Running

There was a time, not too long ago, when I believed that I lived a normal life. Never mind that I didn't remember much of my childhood and what I did remember was full of inconsistencies which, despite my college education, I never thought to question. And never mind that I had always felt like I'd been through a war and that I'd been raped. Or that I had repetitive nightmares with very bizarre sadistic scenes. I never thought to question these dreams or wonder if they had really happened.

Until one day I just woke up and knew beyond a shadow of a doubt that 'my dad did it.' Suddenly I knew what I had known all along, my father had raped me. For a year, I struggled whether to pursue this matter further. After all, I reasoned, he only raped me once a long time ago and what did it matter now? But during that year, I became increasingly forgetful and lost more time. I had periods when people talked to me and I did not understand them (as if they were speaking a foreign language), feelings of impending doom, accident-proneness due to a sort of psychological tunnel vision, inability to see an object even though it was right in front of me, and other frightening symptoms.

I knew this was directly related to my unwillingness to deal with my rape, so I entered therapy. The day before my first session I decided that I would let myself write about the rape and found out I had multiple personalities. I was immediately introduced to two parts, one that recorded the event and one that felt the rape. I didn't tell my therapist for about a month because I thought she would think I was crazy and beyond help. I'd only read *Sybil* once in junior high and had no idea of the rising number of cases of multiplicity. I only knew I had it and I wanted to heal as fast as possible.

At first, I remembered only my father's and brother's sadistic rapes and my mother's extreme physical abuse, which included such things as near drownings and strangulations followed by CPR

or mouth-to-mouth resuscitation. Within a few months, however, I began to remember group sexual and physical abuse.

I really resisted the idea of satanism. It soon became clear, however, when I began recalling the satanic chants and ceremonies of worship to satan. Until then, I did not, could not, imagine that satanism was involved at all. One of the reasons for this was the lack of black robes, candles, and occult symbols.

My abusers belonged to a multi-generational Native American satanic group. It included members of my family and outsiders, as well as recruited high society people, runaway children who were kidnapped from areas known for prostitution, and recruits from child pornography rings.

If this sounds like a lot of people, it is, because the cult was actually a group of six clans named after various animals, natural elements, and occult spiritual leaders. The leaders were both males and females, who were often related by marriage. (There were many cult intermarriages within the individual clans. For example, I was married to both my brother and to satan, and my mother was married to both my father and to my grandfather.) In some clans the male was the stronger leader and in other clans the female was the stronger leader. This is a perversion of a Native American concept, where tribes can be either matriarchal or patriarchal.

The largest and most important group was named after a Native American healing and power animal. Only those who had worked their way through the other clans could join, except those that had hereditary family rights. This clan was led for a time by a Native American, named after the clan's totem, who was well versed in the various Native American rituals. He borrowed from many of them, twisting them as he twisted Christian concepts.

All our dancing ceremonies and many other ceremonies took place in a circle without occult symbols present. The circle symbolized the circle of life and death (not of life as Native Americans believe). The belief was that once inside the circle, one could not escape and would become entrapped within it.

The circle had four directions, North, East, South, and West, connected with the four elements of earth, fire, water, and air, and also with three important Native American animals and satan. (Satan was the head of the West which, for some Native American tribes, is the direction of bad or evil.) The clan leader taught that we are all one with everything, that everything has life, and all life is sacred. Fire, water, animals: each has a spirit. There is the individual spirit in the individual animal, the grand spirit in

charge of that animal, and a shape-changer kind of spirit that can take on the characteristics of other animals and elements.

Each clan had its own element or animal, and cult members created alters to act out the role. We shape-changed into that being or element. Thus in one clan the main abuses involved fire. Each child and adult who was a successful member of the group had a part which could change into fire or abuse fire in some way. Those abuses included roasting small animals alive over an open fire, throwing live animals in the fire and forcing them to stay until they died, and threatening to burn each other.

The children had to walk through a ring of fire without getting burned. I walked over one log of fire, and then more and more logs, until the cult felt it was enough. (Obviously, such things as calluses on the feet, timing, the heat of the fire, the height of the flame, speed of walking, and a sort of psychological biofeedback were factors in doing this successfully.) I was taught to evoke the Fire-Being (which was actually an alter) into me and then become one with the fire, air, water, and wood. As I became older, I created increasingly sophisticated alters to complete this task.

My first alter to walk through a ring of fire was called Frosty, as in Frosty the Snowman. Then, as I understood more, I created an alter named Waterman, who looked like an erect lizard and had a film of slippery watery material over him. My last, most mature creation was Fire-Being, who was, in essence, fire itself, a living fire.

In another clan, we all acted like wolves, dogs, or wolf-dogs. Alters were created to carry out these roles, to deal with the trauma, and to carry out required abuses. We ate like dogs and barked like dogs. All the children learned to fight, biting and scratching like dogs, and to nurse the mother dog (a female human) like puppies.

In another clan, there was an elaborate ritual involving tarantulas. We were orally raped with tarantulas, forced to eat live tarantulas, and put in an enclosed space with many of them.

In the fifth clan, we were required to shape-change into cats and each female child was told she was going to be the mother of that clan. In an elaborate ritual, I supposedly gave birth to a litter of kittens to be raised and used by satan. It really involved a drugged sleep, insertion of various kitten parts, and then the ceremonial taking out of these parts.

The sixth group was more magical by nature and served as an initiation group for new recruits. A sort of sexual Dungeons and Dragons was played out, with alters playing various roles.

Children from the main group who were well trained (i.e., who had various alters created through sadistic abuse) were placed in this group to fulfill the recruits' sexual fantasies.

I was taught intricate and complicated dances which included the movements, actions, and behaviors of different animals. This was a form of worship of these animals as creatures under satan's power and as different forms satan takes to display himself to the world. This is a perversion of the Plains Indians' concept of the Great Spirit and of Hopi beliefs regarding kachinas. Many times created alters believed they had become animals, and I experienced myself as an eagle flying above the dancers, or actually believed I was a bear, or dog, or cat.

They taught me that everything has life and everything is sacred, then they turned around and forced me to abuse an animal or use one of the elements in an abusive way. Only one who embraces Native American values and beliefs can appreciate how this spiritual abuse tore me apart inside. Everything that was considered sacred had been degraded, abused, and used to abuse others.

The cult went through periods, depending on the leadership, when they stressed satanic teachings more than Native American beliefs, and periods when they stressed perverted Native American beliefs more than satanic beliefs. I have described the Native American period, which lasted many years. When the emphasis became more satanic, my alters had a very difficult time adjusting because many of them espoused Native American beliefs.

My healing has been a struggle, and I am still continuing on the journey. I have a very kind, gentle, and patient husband who has stood by me and an extensive support network of friends, Christian clergy, and lay people, Native American acquaintances, and my therapist. With their support and my own inner strength, I have been able to heal while working full-time and completing a master's degree.

Throughout my recovery, I have sought as much physical, emotional, and spiritual healing as possible. I have found that I reach a certain plateau only to circle around and deal with the same issues again. Each time the healing is on a higher level. It is a continual spiral path upward towards a more complete and total being.

Perhaps I will never reach the point of total healing, but I will enjoy the journey and I will experience life in increasingly abundant, fulfilling, and complete ways. I will feel more and more

the sacred connection with all life, the real connection, not the perverted one.

Let me end with a concept which I am only beginning to understand: "MITAKUYA OWASIN" (Dakota for "We are all related" or "all my relatives").

Supporting My Wife in Her Healing

Art

Two Bears Running and I have been married for ten years, and I knew her for three years before that. I remember the first few days I met her. I immediately saw that she was a very smart, strong, determined individual, and someone easy to talk to. I knew that she was a lovely lady, and yet I sensed that something terrible had happened in her past. I couldn't quite get a grasp on it, but I felt it was most likely along the lines of sexual abuse or rape.

I knew this because of the way she reacted to little things like shying away from a kiss and not wanting to be touched or held at certain times. When I approached her in loving, kind, intimate ways, she responded by violently curling up into a ball, pushing me away. It was as if she were reliving some sort of past experience. At other times, it was just the opposite. She wanted to be held, but she couldn't explain why she felt this way. One of the hardest things for me to deal with was how it seemed like I was not having sex with my wife, or like I was making love only to her body and nothing else.

We had completed a lot of the work in the area of sexuality before she obtained her first real memory in our fourth year of marriage. I was not shocked to learn that she had been raped; the difficulties in our marriage pointed in that direction. I was surprised, however, because both she and I felt the rape probably occurred by a boyfriend rather than a relative. It took her a year to figure out if she really wanted to remember the details of the rape or just forget about it. I, too, felt ambivalent, because her father had been helpful to us at times in the past. It required a lot of thinking on both of our parts to decide that remembering would really be worth the effort.

Eventually, she just became so forgetful and scattered in her thinking that we both thought it would be better if she found out. The day before she scheduled her first appointment with a therapist is the day she learned that she had multiple

personalities. I didn't find out for a few more weeks. Looking back, the signs were there all along.

When we were remodeling the house, Two Bears Running confused and frustrated me no end. She had never carpeted, laid ceramic tiled floors, or wallpapered. However, she is a real go-getter and is willing to tackle any project. If we bought the tiles one day, she was plugging away at the project the next day. I was the one with the experience, but she got off work sooner than I did and delved right in without waiting for me to get home.

I explained how to do the projects the night before. However, when I got home she was doing it her own way and did not even remember what I told her. I could not understand this because she didn't seem to be deliberately undermining me; she seemed to genuinely not remember. When I discovered she was multiple, lots of instances like this suddenly made sense. (By the way, the remodeling did turn out well. She went to hardware stores, got written instructions, and followed them.)

I didn't then, and don't even now, fully understand what was going on. I don't know what it is like to be multiple. She tries to explain, but it is just so foreign to me that it is hard to grasp. I know that she has broken up into many separate parts to survive the severe trauma, but how, really, can this be? Two Bears Running is still there, but she is not the same. As she integrates, I can see her becoming more whole, yet this process continues to confuse me.

Some of the worst times for me came during her remembering process. She wanted to share her experiences with me. What she has been through is just so far beyond the normal range of human experience that it was very difficult to listen to. I went through shock, disbelief, compassion, anger, ambivalence, and caring. I still cycle through everything except the shock and disbelief.

If I hadn't known how totally logical, rational, and objective my wife was before these memories, I don't know that I would have believed her. Knowing her and the way she thinks so well, though, helped me to accept what she said. We went to some of the locations where the abuse occurred to see if she remembered it right, and if it could have happened the way she thought. We also analyzed certain memories (when she was ready) to see if they were even possible. I helped her figure out ways to go back to her family and have the memories validated without her family knowing what was going on. We tested out theories based on her memories and, time and again, had them validated to our satisfaction.

Hearing those memories was very difficult. It was just so much. How could anyone live through such an experience, let alone

someone I know and care so deeply about? She needed me a lot during that time. I needed to be available to hold and to hug her, to reassure her that she wasn't crazy, and that she really was doing a good job of balancing healing, work, school, friends, and family. I had to be willing to listen to and learn about the dark sides of herself and not judge her.

I became more open than ever before in my life. I had to be willing to be honest and express my own emotions towards what was going on in order to be there for her. I know that she worked hard to plunge through the difficult remembering process, and it helped for her to know that we were in this together as a team. But there are times when I wished things could just be normal, that we could just have a normal life and do normal things. We still had fun, but the fun was always underlaid with the trauma.

My wife is still multiple. She originally had three thousand parts and has condensed them down to three. She has a ways to go, but not nearly as far as she's come. She has, thankfully, remembered most of the trauma. Now she is dealing with present emotions and current relationships and the crisis is mainly over.

There are still times when crises come up and when it happens, I need to just *be* there. Parts of her simply pop out, not like it's planned or anything. I do become frustrated when a part comes out that doesn't know how to work the TV, or who wants to talk about bunnies, but for the most part I have learned to go with the flow. However, when a child part is out and I feel like talking to my wife, well, let's just say that sometimes it's inconvenient, and even the most patient of people have their limits. This is not to say that I feel like this all of the time.

My wife has a lot of cooperation among her parts and they can usually sense when I need a break or need to talk to Two Bears Running or another particular part. I look forward to the day of even more internal cooperation and, hopefully, even complete integration.

Two Bears Running and I have been a team for a long time. Just as she (and her parts) have helped me, so do I help her.

The Trap

Jessica Turner

The Way In

I was born to upper middle class cultist parents on the winter solstice almost fifty years ago. During my first year our family had a nanny, a European girl, who worked for my parents in exchange for her entry visa. She loved me, and I her, but she left when the year was up. Within days of her leaving, we became multiple, splitting into five alters and hiding the baby who remembered normal love.

Mother (or her alters) started sexually abusing us when we were still a toddler. She called them doll games. If we were willing to pretend we were a doll, neither moving nor showing expression, she would cuddle us. We were desperate for that physical affection, even when it became sexual. Gradually, bigger and bigger things were inserted into our vagina and anus, to 'prepare us for Daddy.' We were punished when we cried, shut up in the crying room (a small closet) until we 'cheered up.'

When we were three, Daddy started raping us. Our internal community grew. By the time we were four, we cried a lot and were often hysterical. We were told the crying room was no longer enough. Now we were placed in a cedar chest, with a small crack for air, and left in the attic under strict orders to make no noise, not to get out, not to mind being enclosed. We were there for hours, punished for crying, for trying to get Mommy to stop what Daddy was doing to us.

One weekend, when Mommy was going away, leaving us with Daddy, we got so frantic that she seemed to agree to take us with her. We packed our suitcase and got in the car, but Mommy switched, and her meanest alter pulled the car over to an empty lot and dragged a shovel and a big wooden box out of the trunk of the car and into the center of the lot. There she dug a hole.

Terrified into obedience, clinging to a toy skunk, we stood quietly shivering as she dug the hole. She railed that it was our

fault, our need, our crying, that had driven her to this desperate measure. We climbed into the box at her command and did no more than whimper as she nailed on the lid, which had a four-inch hole in the center of it. She pushed the box into the hole, and, fitting a pipe to the hole in the lid, shoveled dirt over it. We heard the car drive away, but fear of her anger kept us quiet, struggling to smother even our whimpering.

We soiled and wet ourselves and we cried uncontrollably for hours. The very touch of the box, the stink of each breath, reinforced the fact that we must have deserved this, that we were so monstrous in our need of Mommy's comfort, in our objections to Mommy's and Daddy's abuse, that we had driven her to this.

At one point we heard voices. Hunters? Hallucinations? We'll never know. Night followed, then day, then another night. Terror and misery gave way slowly to the calm of total collapse and approaching death. Soon it would be over, we thought, and most of us were glad.

The noise of a shovel registered, but not with relief. Mother got us out of the box, bitching at the stink and saying that we seemed fine. We vaguely realized that this state of near-catatonia was what Mother must have been trying for all along. She stripped off our clothes and threw them back in the box with the pipe, dressed us in clean clothes from our suitcase, and buried the box carefully. On the way home, the Mommy alter talked about the wonderful things we had done that weekend, reinforcing our inability to distinguish abusive fact from benign fiction.

Shortly after that, we attempted suicide by drowning, resulting in a near-death experience. We felt God's deep love, but He sent us back. Some alters were infused with a sense of mission, believing that God needed us to survive and expose what was done to us. Others felt we were so horrible that even God didn't want us near Him.

That suicide attempt resulted in Mommy's mean alter confronting us with The Threat — if we died without permission, we would be put in a box to stay there forever, conscious as the body rotted around us, conscious as the brain decayed, leaving us without even the ability to think to distract us from the awareness of our existence, minute after minute, for all eternity.

Short stretches in a box, or even the mention of being shut in, left us panic-stricken and driven to please this powerful woman. To her, perhaps, it felt like what her own mother had called 'love.' She, too, might have her own terrors of being thrown into a box for all eternity.

The Cult

On our sixth birthday, we were brought into the cult. All of the alters who had been part of us were overwhelmed; they vanished as we lay on the altar and watched the priestess come at us with a ritual knife. Suddenly the knife turned on her, and she and I watched in horror as it plunged into her chest. This, our ascent to the priestesshood, was celebrated by joining sexually with every person there, repeatedly, all night long. Left without any conscious memory of The Box and The Threat, the newly created alters had no understanding of their influence on us.

As the rituals started, we were inside a wooden statue of the goddess. We were let out of this upright box when the goddess was supposedly inside us, controlling our actions. Over the years we ritually slaughtered birds, then animals, including the family dog. We regularly joined sexually with each cult member.

The Threat continued to keep us frantic, without even the tiny advantage of being consciously aware of it. If we were quiet, did that mean that they would leave us in the box/statue for longer and longer? If we were needy or otherwise bad, did that mean confinement for all eternity?

The awareness that the outside world would condemn us to horrible punishments if they knew what we had done set up enormous barriers to remembering the cult outside of rituals, and made us feel that we deserved anything that happened to us. Horrible punishments awaited us for doing horrible things, for not doing them, for being frantic and needy, for being quiet and cooperative. This magnified the force of the classic double bind, the pull of conflicting demands, and the enormous internal and external resistance to recognizing what was making us so frantic.

Animal sacrifices gave way to occasional, then more frequent, human sacrifices, then necrophilia. (Yes, you can rape a girl with a dead body.) We watched for opportunities to get out, and the leader of our internal community continued to believe that we would escape. Possibly building on the near-death experience, sometimes we believed that God would guide and protect us.

But day by day, our only hope centered on Mother, somehow making her love us, or convincing ourselves that she did love us, that we weren't a monster, that we didn't deserve to be punished. But our importunate demands made her frantic. The more she pushed us away, telling us that we were too needy for a child of our age, the more we clung. We could not make a viable false self: the façade failed with any sign of rejection.

Insidiously, Mother's reaction was echoed by every one else in the world. We clung to teachers, friends, any person who paid us

any attention. We couldn't say, "Tell me I'm not a monster," or, "Don't let me be buried," because we didn't know that was the issue. We just clung, and of course we were pushed away, sooner or later. Our need was not normal; it made most people uncomfortable, and eventually everybody sent us back to Mommy.

Trapped

At fifteen, as far as we know, the cult was finished with us. There is no evidence that we were ever called back, as so many survivors have reported. We have speculated that the parents lost a power struggle within the cult, and quit, rather than continue in a secondary position.

Being finished with cult participation did nothing to free us. We felt more thrown out than freed, with a lot of pressure to have successful lives so that our parents could feel good about us. From the time we were fifteen until we were thirty-five, we tried to survive in the world, to find something to ease the terrible pain by the only avenue available to us — pretending (unsuccessfully) that it didn't exist, so that people would tolerate our presence. And everyone in the world, by avoiding our pain, reinforced our parents' message that we were terrible, and that the nicest thing we could do for people who cared about us was to stay away from them.

Our early college years were full of drug use and sexual promiscuity with people we didn't like. We married a man who was callous enough to be able to tolerate our enormous pain, as long as we didn't shove it in his face too much. Our second marriage was to a man who seemed to have more capacity to care, but he ended up using our pain and fear to justify hurting us. We tried to get help from friends and professionals, but none could see beyond the normal range of dysfunction, and all had strict boundaries, so we were always convinced they saw us as monstrous and deserving of punishment.

The Way Out

Finally we were lucky enough to meet our present therapist, who had experience working with trauma survivors. She recognized immediately that we had gone through hell. She gave us clear messages that it was all right to be frightened, and in pain. She let us cling to her, call her when we were in crisis; and she supported us as we gradually released the terror that had always kept us from asking for anything.

Then a suicidal crisis led her to hospitalize us. We were flooded with memories of the child abuse, the forty-eight hours in the box, and memories of other boxes. After our release, therapy sessions

built gradually from once to five times a week in an attempt to keep up with the flood.

Eventually, our therapist felt she had to impose limits on our demands. We felt betrayed. First she had offered a relationship that had seemed so much better than our parents and our husbands could give, and then she wasn't going to be there in the way we had counted on. What we didn't know was that we had been approaching remembering The Threat, and that when she felt that she had to impose limits, all the old terrors kicked in.

Everything seemed to reflect the Threat. When our therapist was oblivious to or puzzled by the panic that limits caused, it echoed Mother pushing us away with The Threat. Suicide contracts meant that if we died without permission, the Threat would be fulfilled; and if we died with permission God might accept us this time.

Our therapist could not understand why our self-esteem remained so low. She was giving us more time, energy, and attention than she had ever shown anyone before; she bathed us in positive regard; she bent normal therapy limits as far as she could tolerate; she went to conferences about multiplicity and ritual abuse. Still we cried that she hated us; she terrified us; she was out to torture us, and that wanting us to live meant wanting us to suffer. She couldn't stand the fact that we saw her as hurtful when she was trying so hard with so little support, and any time these feelings leaked through, even a little, it panicked us still more.

It took everything we both had: caring, commitment, trust, and painful work, to uncover the Threat and see the ways her well-meaning and understandable human responses seemed to reinforce it. We are both impressed by the way that ordinary life experiences reinforce the message that we were horrible, and we can understand why no one else in the family has gotten near to remembering what happened.

I don't know how many other ritual abuse survivors are struggling with similar threats, knowingly or unknowingly. I do know that for the first time in my life I can contemplate leaving my therapist's office without the overwhelming pain that had always accompanied any separation. She can understand and empathize with my pain, and apologize for when she didn't understand and when she gave me messages, without meaning to, that kept me locked in.

After ten years of therapy, I finally believe that I will be okay. Now if I can just land a decent job...

I Walk on the Faces of the Dead

Living Earth

the dates are etched on the headstone 1792-1868 I rely on my one good eye to see this crow feather speaks from earth nearby it is in my hand now, but I do not feel it; the hand, like consciousness, is passed from self to self to self the howling begins, and then stops waiting somewhere nearby are all the memories

but I cannot find them they are flickers of light just out of reach there and then gone before identified and recognized there is only the intermittent light the run-on sentence of a life old messages branded on the mind cell-deep there is only the one good eye engorged with blood filled with the color red hated, feared red of nightmares and terror-filled flashes of something

stairs the wooden stairs that go down, down so narrow and old no protection small feet could easily slip they keep the chickens down there where the smell lives the blood smell the animal smell all of it woven together, so unrecognizable THE TRIBE MUST SURVIVE the good of the many outweighs the good of the one the child the cousin says SCAPEGOAT they project all of their guilt, fear, pain, frustration, grief, rage onto THE OTHER and then the slaughter the old custom, old as hills and ashes BUT NOT THE JEWS oh no OY OY OY SHIKKUR IS A GOY the drunk is a non-jew the wife beater child raper soul stealer all non-jew non-us they must keep the faith secrets the tribe safe from THEM safe from Treblinka Auschwitz-Birkenau death camps

they send me to camp Zionist camp after the war secrets and howling fill bones the headaches come memories of hands home filled with rituals mother routine rituals again and again the howling remembers, not I I am scattered in the wind the NOT I the hated red dripping pouring and

screaming everywhere but no one hears someone says BUT IT'S NOT A CULT but it's a cabal conspiracy of silence the tribe must survive pour the sins on the child so the adults can walk smiling in the outside amerikan world

they call the mother nigger LIKE A NIGGER they say AND CRAZY her Russian gypsy skin chestnut brown in summer

LOOK AT YOUR MOTHER THE NIGGER one good eye left crow feather speaks "I am gossip, but will not tell what they bring from Europe, from Spain, from places lost in time space memory silent legend" A TORAH UNTO ITSELF it's them, not us the goys the outsiders we are the chosen people newspaper says jewish women finally speak out about domestic violence violence endorsed by jewish law

the secret door opens too much for the eye to see I can't remember howling begins again I walk on the faces of the dead

A Story of Hope

Mary Elizabeth Williams

I was born on a Friday the thirteenth in a small rural community in the deep south. My mother was only sixteen years old. Her father, a Southern Baptist minister in this small community, was there for my birth. He was a large man with red hair, and was well known in the community for his wonderfully inspiring sermons and his charismatic manner. He was born in Europe and had come to the United States as a young boy with his family. He settled in the deep South, and when he was a young man married a women he met at church. He went on to get his own church when he was still quite young, and developed a following that were so taken with his charm, that they thought he was some kind of God. So many people loved him!

Behind this guise of being a loving and compassionate minister was the soul of a very evil man. He came to the United States bringing his old Celtic beliefs with him. He had long ago, probably as a young boy, become involved with the occult. After coming to the United States and getting his own church, he was able to bring many followers into the darker side of his beliefs. He had two churches: one was made up of those that went to church on Sunday to hear him preach the word of God, and the other of those that had sold themselves to another power, much darker and more sinister.

This group of followers met in the same church in which the word of God was preached from the pulpit on Sunday, only they met late at night, when all the doors were locked, and the only light was from candles. Many horrible atrocities took place in church late at night and also in the woods behind the church. This self-proclaimed man of God was really a vessel for satan, and all his family was brought into the cult, and made to serve his God, the evil one.

Since my birthday was on a Friday the thirteenth, and because I was the result of the coupling of my grandfather and my mother, my birth was celebrated, and it was deemed that I would be

'special' in this unholy church. I was expected to train to become a high priestess and carry down the rites and rituals into the next generation. Nothing would ever get in the way of that!

My mother was a very disturbed woman. I am sure she had been made to submit to and commit many horrible acts both as a child and throughout her adult life. She learned very well, however, and became very evil, just like her father. I have always felt that there are some people who are born into the world with no conscience; pulled from the dark side, with no hope of ever finding peace in their souls, and living only for the damage and pain that they can cause others. Both my grandfather and my mother fit this category. I am sure they were sent to earth by satan himself. There was not one bit of good in either of them.

I was always afraid of my mother (even as an adult), but it has only been in the last few years that I have been able to piece together, at least in part, the reason for my fear.

Two years ago I was diagnosed as having multiple personalities. It took me several months to accept this diagnosis, but I knew that I must have some kind of 'disorder' because my life was such a mess.

Even as a small child I lost time. I was in the world one day and then not again for sometimes weeks, months, or maybe even years! As I got older, I still lost time like this, but I became very adept at covering up. Covering up that someone said they knew me, and I didn't have a clue who they were. Covering up that they called me by some name that I did not even begin to recognize, or told me that they had met me somewhere that I had no recollection of having ever been.

Work and school were always very difficult for me because I was never sure that I would be able to remember the day before, or the week before, and what had taken place during that time that I was away. In my teens, I moved from city to city, trying to escape some awful thing from my past, but I was not sure exactly what that awful thing was. Some days I woke up in a strange place, maybe in a motel room with a strange man, feeling really sick, but not remembering how I got there, or who the person was I was with.

I somehow got involved with a man who was connected to prostitution, and I became a call girl for him. Now I know that he was a friend of my mother's and was a member of the same cult as she.

This pimp, who was called Snake by those that knew him well, was the high priest of his branch of the 'Brotherhood of the Dark.'

He sold young women and children in a prostitution ring to many high ranking people in the city. I worked for him from the ages of thirteen to fifteen. At that time, my mother brought me back home and I finished high school while living with her.

Most of my life, time was something I just could not grasp. There are parts of my life I remember vividly, and other parts are just a total blank. I know that when I was eighteen, I married a very good looking young boy who was also part of the cult, but I had no memory of the wedding. I got pregnant with him, and we had a baby. My mother named the child. I had no choice in the naming, it was just done for me.

When I was twenty-one and working again for Snake, I met a man who was a regular client. I told him that I was afraid someone was trying to kill me, and asked him if he would take me to another city. He agreed, and so I left with him and we moved across the country. I got pregnant again, but I have no idea who the father of this child was. (There was a great deal of missing time for me throughout all these years.) I lived with this man for twenty years. He seemed able to tolerate that I would be gone for days at a time; he never questioned me about where I had been or even commented on it.

Somehow, I would find myself in a room with men I did not know, or I would wake up and I would be at my mother's and father's house and not remember having gone there. I would not remember a plane trip or a car trip, but somehow I always made it across the country. During those years I did not work, as the man I lived with was very wealthy. I'm not sure that I could have held down a normal job anyway because there were so many days I couldn't account for.

Five years ago, he died and left all his property to his sons, who insisted that I leave the home we had lived in for twenty years. My children were now old enough to be living on their own, but had no room to take me in. I did stay with them for a short time, but because I was drinking heavily and they had small children of their own, I had to leave.

Again, I found myself in a motel room with a man I didn't know. It turned out he was very violent, and when I tried to leave, he became extremely angry. He said he had paid for me for the week, and there was no way in hell he wasn't going to get his money's worth. My body was in such awful pain from his beatings that I could hardly bear to move. For several days I was locked up in the motel room with this man and was repeatedly raped. He tied me to the bed post and spent hours telling me how he was going to kill me after he was done with me. He raped me both vaginally and

rectally, used his knife to make cuts on my breasts and inside my thighs, and laughed and told me 'the best was yet to come.'

After a week, the man left the room, and I was sure I was left for dead. I was able to contact the hotel operator and asked for assistance, saying I had been raped. The police and an ambulance arrived. I was taken to a county hospital and my physical injuries were treated. I gave the police a description of the man, but as far as I know he has never been found.

After being released from the medical facility, I was transferred to the county mental health hospital. I am not sure how long I stayed in there, as again, I had lots of lost time. One morning a nurse came in and told me I was being discharged. I was groggy from all the medication I had been given, but I knew I was terrified of leaving the hospital, because I had nowhere to go. I was given the phone number of a woman's shelter and the name of a social worker.

I contacted the social worker, who agreed to meet me at the women's shelter, because I was afraid that I would not make it to her office. That meeting was the beginning of a new life for me! Now as I look back on it, I can say, the beginning of a better life for me, but I had no idea what I would have to go through to reach that better life.

I was very anxious during my first visit with the social worker. But she put me at ease, and after about an hour she was able to get somewhat of a history from me. I told her that even as a small child I had what I called 'lost time.' I told her that I was always terrified and that on more than one occasion, I had 'come to' in a hospital from apparently attempting suicide. The most difficult part to tell was that I heard voices. I knew that when I told her that, she would definitely think I was a nut case and send me straight back to the state mental hospital. I thought that was where I belonged anyway, so I took the chance and told her.

She listened and seemed sincerely interested. At the end of our time together, she said that she would like for me to meet with someone she felt could help me. She assured me that she did not think I was crazy, and that she had worked with this doctor several times before and really respected his opinion. She made arrangements for me to continue staying at the woman's shelter, as I really had no other place to go.

The three of us met and spent about an hour and a half together. At the end of the session, the doctor said that he would like to see me on a regular basis, twice a week, and that, at least

until I found work, he would not charge me for the visits. I agreed, and started my treatment.

After a couple of months I developed a strong bond with him. I was able to tell him about the awful nightmares I was having, and about what I called 'daymares.' Daymares are just like nightmares, but I had them during the day. I would be just sitting, maybe reading a book or watching television, and the nightmare would start. I would go into a total panic and then black out, or have a blank spell, or, as I call it, lost time. I just knew I was completely, hopelessly, and totally crazy. That I was walking with one foot in the 'snake pit,' and at any minute I would be committed to a mental institution and would remain there for the rest of my life.

At one of our sessions, my doctor said he thought I was ready to talk about my diagnosis. He told me I was a multiple personality. He had met and had lengthy conversations with several of my other parts and our goal in therapy would be to get all the parts working and talking together. "A kind of family, inside." He explained that multiple personality did not mean I was crazy, it only meant that I had some really awful stuff happen to me as a child, and that splitting into more than one part had helped me cope.

I was confused and afraid. What did it all mean? How could I have more than one person living inside my body? How could I not know that I had others living inside of me? Did they know about me, even though I didn't know about them?

He explained all this, and more, to me over the next few months. He asked me to start keeping a journal and to ask inside for any of the other parts that wanted to communicate with me to use the journal. I was astounded to find messages written to me by people who signed their names. They would tell me about themselves and how long they had been with me and about their likes and dislikes, fears and anxieties. Over time, through the journaling, I grew to feel as though I knew them. The voices in my head began to be less and less confusing. It was as though the parts inside now had a vehicle by which to state their wishes and concerns, and they used this method rather than all screaming out at once.

My doctor suggested that I ask the parts that felt comfortable doing so to speak directly to me. Within a few days, I was hearing the voices that had identified themselves on paper and were now willing to talk to me. Some of them were very kind and gentle and others were angry and hostile, but over time, I grew to love and care about each and every one. As the months passed, I learned that these parts of me had taken some terrible abuse in my stead. They held the memories that were just too awful for me to

remember alone. They had taken the pain, the fear, the shame, and the memories, and I owe them a great deal. I owe them my life.

I have now been in therapy for three years. I have been able to get my life together enough to find and hold down a job in an office, and can even afford to pay at least a discounted rate for my therapy. I still see my doctor twice a week, and for the past year we have been doing memory work. I listen and watch as the parts of me talk about the abuse they endured at the hands of a generational satanic cult, and I am amazed that the human spirit is strong enough to endure such horrific things. I am beginning to understand my parts more and more, and I find that I have very little lost time these days.

The therapy is still tough. Remembering is still tough. But I know now, and I didn't know before, that there is light at the end of the tunnel. I give thanks every day to my most precious parts that saved my soul from satan's grasp.

I still have a long way to go, and I know that the road will not be easy, but I have a wonderful therapist who has been able to stick with me through all of this. I have developed a small group of support people that are safe, and all my parts and I are getting to know each other better every day.

My goal is to get well and then do whatever I can to educate people about the horrors of abuse and to help others become whole. I know that I will be able to achieve this goal. My struggle has been long and hard, but it has made me see that nothing is impossible. I look forward to the day when I can help others the way I have been helped.

My message to everyone who reads this: There is hope. There is a way to live with ritual abuse. You will never forget it, but you can become whole and lead a rich and full life. Keep working and never, no never, give up.

Learning to be Human

Morgana

I am a minister's granddaughter. Yeah, right, well, someone in this body is; maybe even most of us. But me? How does that fit into the life I led: trained to kill people, taught to feel nothing? I came late into being, you see, from the children in here who were tortured until the cult almost destroyed our humanity. Almost. And why is that? Why despite all we were taught, all humane that was withheld from us, did we still manage to raise fine children of our own, leave the cult behind, and work teaching others?

Let me start near the beginning. My abusers were on my mother's side of the family. Back-forest folks who practiced their rituals in isolation on Halloween, Beltane, and other such holidays. Who knows what happens in the forest? Who cared to know?

Who wants to know now? How about the fasting before each trip to the woods? Do you want to know of the enemas before going to visit Grandma, who lived in the woods? We had to be clean inside, you know. My mother packed my siblings and me into the car and drove for hours into the woods when the holidays approached. Once there, cousins found us playing somewhere, maybe in the creek, loaded us kids into dog cages in the back of old trucks and hauled us to family religious ceremonies (rituals) and barbecues (cannibalism).

Every year, children in our family died. Some cousins never came back; some of us died, not in the dog cages, but caged in between adults with knives and strange marks on their faces. Do you know what it's like when the little kid you were just playing with (how dare we still know to play) dies and you do not? She was the barbecue that year. Gained a wolf alter in our bio-house (my word for the body) over that.

Never mind, maybe only my Vietnam vet friends can comprehend such things. And no one should have to. I hate what the abuse makes us ask other people. I have hated for so long where I came

from and what I stood for. It took years to chip away to find the thought that I never had a choice or chance to be the kind of person whose worst adventure was a flat tire beside the road, and who asks nothing more than, "why did grandma have to die of old age?" Man, I long to ask those questions instead. Do you get it?

I would like just once to not be the one in an AA meeting whose story leaves others' mouths hanging open catching flies. (Not that I would trust enough to tell most of my story to any but other survivors.) Or have them slowly withdraw from me after years of friendship. Or tell me that my life did not happen. Yeah, right. Not that I tell them a whole lot or find it anything damned short of impossible to talk. But I try, and the sponsors who didn't run, hide, or criticize, but offered understanding, translation, validation, and compassion are certainly major contributors to my successfully stopping all cult-related activities. They helped me to live with my past, leave my violent tendencies, and begin to fill out my humanity.

Learning to be human should not be a task. The rigorous honesty required for sobriety was the turning point of my life.

My mom tried, she really did. She married a minister's son and moved to a suburb of a big city several hundred miles away from her mother's family. She registered us kids with the government, gave us social security numbers, and signed us up for school, a big huge no-no in her family.

I do not know what was done to her, but it plagued her and laid on us like a plague as a result. She got really crazy when holidays approached. Guess the only way she could cope was by going back and taking us with her. She was a tortured woman, prone to breakdowns, anger, and such cruelty as you think only exists in the newspapers of someone else's town. And this was normal to us.

We moved every two years or so because the doctors started acting concerned over all the 'accidental' poisonings, injuries, and sicknesses of her children. New town, new doctors, etc. She was also sexual with all her children, starting with me. She couldn't keep her hands off me, her oldest daughter, and she didn't seem to understand that she and I and everyone else in the world were separate people with separate bodies and wills. What she did to us in here was the beginning of making me what I am. She brought me into her room for naps, made me touch her in those places no one at age five should even know about. Sticking things in me. Killing my dog because of a drawing I did in first grade that showed too clearly what was going on. Hell, I didn't know what I'd drawn...

I don't call or see my mom anymore. My choice.

Trapped worse than if I was caged, suffocated with rage and pain in that dark ugly room, loaded shotgun by the bed, with that woman on me. My doll, Nancy, watched with her upturned sad and otherworldly eyes. We learned by two years old how to become more than one experiencer. We could segregate life into different, shut off, parts. Sort of specialists. One day, when we were about seven, we split off again inside and part went into Nancy, part stayed with mom on her bed, and the rest went into a swirling red and black, molten, rageful mass up in the corner, watching with contained fury the pleading to be found in the dolls' eyes.

Dad bought the doll for us when he went on a business trip out of town. Mute, pitiful, and hurt, to this day she sits on the floor in a corner inside our bio-unit, and stares. With lots of work over many years, she is not catatonic anymore. It is a long way back though. I and others of us in here were born from her rage and deadness.

Nancy feels guilty for the split that left the rage available for the family's use. We still don't know how to realize that pain, how to set her free so that she can play and laugh. The only way we found, we bio-housemates who were the assassins and informants, was to kill and rage. Never knew it was connected to that molten mass until we had been out of the family for many years and working on recovery in many forms. Killing just seemed natural and matter-of-fact for us.

Someone in here always knew this kind of work was wrong. I believe my grandfather and father taught me this, as did something or some-ones inside this bio-unit. Now that we know our violence causes the kids in here much pain, and that they have suffered too much already, we work on finding new ways of working out our anger and pain. Maybe loving our own living children and sponsoring people in recovery has helped us know how to finally love and honor the kids inside. Well that, and patient care from two sponsors, a patient gentle therapist, and e-mail RA survivor friends who have lived like I did at one time, have helped me see other ways of life and other perspectives on the 'truisms' by which I made judgments of right and wrong.

Maybe it was my granddaddy the minister and his wife praying for me constantly over the years. Or bits of love and support that entered me when I was with them. Their son, my dad, never harmed me. He loved us kids and even my mom, I am sure. Of course, mom made him out to be a big monster, for he was a tall man with large hands and a powerful voice, though gentle and a lover of music. But he couldn't abide or control what mom did, so he spent most of his time on jobs away from home. I model his

avoidance and reclusion to this day as I learn non-violent alternatives to conflict.

He wouldn't divorce her until all us kids were grown, so she kept having more children. She even adopted my first daughter when she was too old to have more of her own, just so she could make him stay. He left soon after anyway.

When he came home from the road, the table was set real nice, his favorite foods cooked, and all us kids scrubbed. Good luck finding food if he was not home, though. You'd think, if you didn't watch for more than five minutes, that we were a happy home. You'd think no one as kind and good as my dad could keep blinders on for so many years. But it happens all the time and all over the country. Maybe nothing hurts me more than that blindness. Maybe his love and safety were the bits and pieces that kept parts of me good and alive.

By the time I was in high school I'd had two babies that the cult caused to die. The first baby girl they pulled apart alive. The second one, a baby boy, I killed to save him from growing up in a life like I had, only worse, because he was a 'chosen one,' a warlock-to-be. Defiance. I won't ask you if you can imagine what it's like to kill your own infant, in a fit of emotion I have only seen described well as berzerking. And not out of rage, either. It was pure love that made us do the hardest thing in the world just to save him from a life beyond hell.

After that, something in me snapped. I tried avoiding mom's family religion. The family then killed a school girl I had fallen for. Because she wasn't good cult blood? Because lesbianism wasn't allowed in a world where creating more of your own was the religious requirement? Didn't even know my family was involved in her death. She wasn't more than fifteen, goddamn it, and innocent — and they had her killed! Didn't know it was them that had her killed at the time. Dissociation kept much of my knowledge segregated.

There was another thing that made me snap too. My aunt, who I thought was the only one who wouldn't harm me or make me harm others, gave me and some other alters in here over to others as an information agent in another country. I was an interrogator and an assassin. Even my aunt! Another of those damned threads of hope with illusions of care. And she was the one who had given the order to have my schoolgirl friend killed. Because that relationship might stand in the way of my doing good work overseas? Because I dared to leave the family business/religion?

I sought out some school friends who played around with the town scum. They knew my aunt and uncle too, these dudes who ran an S & M house in the midst of the city. Cuffs, knives, manacles on the padded walls, furnace and snuff, the whole scene. I hated their guts even though I hung out with them, because it was so different from the family I guess. But my hatred did not show. Only whatever it took to gain their trust. I was deliberately and systematically after whoever had tortured and killed my girlfriend. They killed people, had fatal sex with them, kept it all secret, and said it was a secret between us. It fit right in with what my childhood had been, even while it disgusted me. So I organized them better, added some trappings of my family's religion, and found out who killed my friend.

It was there that the last of the training took place for becoming an assassin. Worked against them, in the long run though. When I came back the last time from overseas, I went into cold, calculating mode. I went after the bastards and dispassionately killed every one of the people associated with that house. No family, of course, damn it. You don't need to know the details, and maybe you don't want to know. I'll just say that over two decades later I still can't look at a meat grinder or raw hamburger without flashbacks. But what I did to them I felt (back then) fit the things they'd done to so many young women over the years in that house. I had learned well.

All the pain and rage that was felt in the contained molten mass inside us, and we who saw our playmate cousin killed as a child, and our lover murdered and left in the fields; that is what drove the sheer energy and madness of what we did. Helpless, blind, detached, goddamned molten rage. When your soul has been nearly murdered, but your body left alive, damn it, this is what you can do. Hope is a spider's thread used to prolong the torture of life.

And then you have to live with It. And die with It. It won't ever leave and forget to come back. There will never be a time when everything is okay and wiped clean. What I learned is that when you raise a child on sheer, literal, emotional and physical torture and teach her to let it out by harming others, it will happen. They trained me to be that way.

I also dropped into that berzerk state a couple of times overseas, regrettably. Those scenes still haunt many of us in here. I could have done those things to random kids in my class, neighbors, sales clerks, other drivers, or even my own children (one of my persistent fears), but I didn't. Did I not have, despite all the things that were done to me, the evil and coldness to do such a thing?

I learned that something that could not ever be turned evil survived. Was that what guided me to let that horrifying rage out against some people who others would perceive didn't deserve anything short of the death penalty?

I have tried living with myself as a vigilante. There is no excuse I can find. Period. I've met a few people who do see something under all this in me that is human and compelling and wanting to get away from the violence. What I did was perhaps the only thing that would finally get the family to leave me be. I was a loose cannon, not safe to them, too unpredictable and psychotic, but loyal nonetheless to their secrets. Dissociation, aided by drugs and alcohol, helped me keep their practices secret.

I wanted out. I had seen threads of hope through a Mormon friend of one semester, a baby sitter of several months, and a one-year friend from out of state, each of whom were in my life briefly, but enough for me to thirst for what appeared to be a life different than what I knew. And a grade school teacher who showed me art and Zen. She saved my life with that. I wanted nothing more than having those bastards leave me be so the suffering could stop, so I would never witness another person being killed or hurt. No more barbecues. No more opened hearts.

I married young, to a gay man, just to get out. We had a child together, and she is worth the moon and stars. But my husband mostly managed to do petty robberies and drugs. We divorced. My mom reported me as too poor to be a mother and took custody of my daughter. Thankfully, my girl was raised not just by my mom, but by dad's mom, and many members of my dad's side of the family. She's a young adult now, and is one heck of a young woman. Some folks say I couldn't be nearly all bad to have had a kid like her. I tend to think she just popped out a living miracle and stayed that way, but I can see that how I raised her and loved her, even a little, despite all the things I'd done and seen and think about myself, maybe does have a part in it.

No one in my family ever went to college. I was the first. I was very bright (though I have yet to accept that), interested, and I knew education was a way to a better life. I hid in learning. And I loved learning like nothing else! So I went to college. And I re-married. This husband was a brilliant sociopath. Not much better in some ways than the first, but he was a charmer and oh so intelligent. He also had been sexualized early by his mom. I think his academic and intellectual interests fed me and my love of college and academia, despite all the drawbacks in our marriage. We stayed married until I sobered up.

I had another girl, equally as miraculous and beautiful as the first, but in her own way. I raised her while I got my Masters degree and worked on my Ph.D. Between work and school and raising a family and all the inner pain and terror left from the life I'd had, I really don't know how anyone but a multiple could pull it off. But I did, and got my degrees, and received an offer to teach at a college almost two thousand miles away from my mother and her family. My life had started, in earnest for perhaps the first time, in my third decade, when my second daughter and I drove across country to a new job and locale.

Spider threads of hope are being woven carefully and slowly into a new tapestry of realization.

My Victory is a Tribute

Jen

I choose not to focus overly on the rituals, as they have already consumed enough of my life. Instead, I write of victory over evil. It is my hope that each life my story touches will be influenced in a way that will inspire and renew hope for all survivors, their associates, and their therapists.

I am fortunate to have escaped; many did not. It is for all of those nameless innocents that I work on my recovery every day. My smallest victory is a tribute to them.

Two years before I became pregnant with my 'first' child, I entered group therapy as an ACOA (adult child of an alcoholic), and uncovered sexual abuse. Even with individual therapy, I couldn't shake the dark feeling that crept over me each fall. It wasn't until my baby was born, five years ago, that I began to understand the source of my feelings.

As a small child, I saw very little of my father, and he divorced my mother when I was five. My mother began 'training' me at home at around the age of three. She started by taking me from my bed, fondling me, inserting objects into my body, and instructing me how to touch her 'properly.'

On weekends, I was taken to the farm belonging to my mother's grandmother. She beat me, subjected me to hot and cold enemas and douches, deprived me of food, clothing, and sleep. At all other times she kept me locked up in an empty dark room or hanging by my wrists and ankles in the barn. By age six, I had endured an eternity of sexual assault and various forms of torture.

Gradually I was brought deeper into the cult itself. I was taught different cult roles and the attendant duties and rituals. I became the princess, then a breeder, and two of my fetuses were aborted and sacrificed. The rituals and the training were horrendous; I was routinely forced to observe or participate in murders, cannibalism, and brutal torture of animals and humans.

By the age of twelve, I had been well indoctrinated. All aspects of my life were involved with cult members. They 'placed a pair of eyes' into my abdomen to be sure I knew they were always watching me and that they knew what I was doing at all times. It was evident that they meant for me to lead the cult when I was older, and I felt there was no escape.

At age sixteen, I was to take my final rite as high priestess. I endured six days of severe torture and uncountable brutal rapes. The intent was for me to bear the 'child of satan.' My great-aunt had different plans however. She stole me in the middle of the night and took me to the home of a community doctor, who performed a D&C. When I was well enough, I was released to the streets.

I soon found out I was free, but at a great expense: my aunt's life. She had disappeared, and the next time I saw her was at her funeral. The message was clear. I ran away. I ran for my life.

Today I am married and the mother of a beautiful baby. I work as a nurse and I am still in therapy. I have learned it is now safe to talk, cry, feel, and hope. Because of the trust I have built, my world is expanding beyond the black-and-white thinking of the cult.

My very existence is a tribute to my aunt's selfless love. I also want to pay tribute to my therapist, who has always been there for me, my husband for his patience, and my child for constantly reminding me of what I never had and of how precious childhood is. Finally, thanks to my many friends, who have supported me, listened to me, and shared their own stories. It is a wonderful feeling to be connected to something real.

The Invisible Wheelchair: A Week in the Life of a Survivor

Kailyne

I have this vision of heaven. It doesn't have any of those blue signs that say wheelchair accessible. Everything in heaven is accessible to everyone. The silent ones, the multiples who must function in a 'normal' world, may find peace with this thought.

Here on earth, I begin to tell my story and a crowd forms around me; somewhere between cannibalism and sacrifices the crowd depletes substantially, and I am left holding myself. It would be nice though if you could stay around to hear the truth. There are no medals if you do, usually just a big sigh of relief and a small thanks.

Day one. I begin my morning reassuring the many inside me that we do not have to be hung upside down before we are allowed to take a bath. "No, Amana, we will not be beaten with an electrical cord this morning. Yes, Carlos, we can wear our hair the way you like it, straight and parted in the middle."

It takes a few hours to get out of the house in the morning. There are always more questions than I have answers for. God is very kind, but even Her grace falls short on some mornings when I see blood in my cereal, or hear the whimper of a child.

Some say this subject fascinates them. This makes me angrier than people who walk away. I try and be patient, allow people their process. But what about my process?

I go to work, I make it through lunch. Someone on the phone has triggered me, and I am going deep into a memory. I can't explain what is happening, I need this job. I politely excuse myself from the conversation, hang up and contemplate laying in the corner of my office, on the floor, where it is cool. I can't. I won't. I don't. I compromise, go for a short walk, and promise the little ones (specifying when) that we will deal with this later.

I hate the label cop-out, or attention-seeker. I basically despise attention because of all the bad things that happened when I did receive attention as a child. And I am a fighter, a survivor, a warrior. We all are.

We have the invisible wheelchairs; we are the silent ones, the freaks in people's eyes, not in God's. I don't want to have to wait until heaven to have life accessible to us. After all, we are the walking soldiers, the testimony of human fate and God's Grace. We are creative, intelligent, courageous and honest. I pity you in a way for not believing me. Your spirituality and faith rest in the hands of those who carry an open cross. We are not monsters; we don't need to be fixed or sedated; we are the remnants of human disregard. Can you see the resiliency through our chaotic steps? Can you hear the dove's cry of freedom through our whispered pain?

Day two. I refuse to give in to programming. I choose to try to control the irrational, the unbelievable, and I find myself huddled like a broken toy in the corner of my car, whimpering. I pick up the pieces and reach out for help; not going it alone does not mean weakness; it means courage. The world is backwards; we carry a sick belief that being self-sufficient is the key to success. Like the Little Drummer Boy, God calls us to come empty and broken with nothing to give, only arms open to receive.

I take the first step. I am powerless over the effects of programming. I reach for my crayons and begin to draw; the crayon stuck in my teeth, for certain parts of me have no arms. We can't hurt others that way; we can't strike out against the world. I clutch the crayon in my mouth and begin to color my memory. Here is the proof you are looking for, scrawled in crayon on the back of a Kleenex box. A picture of pain. A picture of death. My head is splitting open and my vision is gone. My head feels as though it will shatter into tiny pieces. I can feel myself go away — and this too shall pass — hang on. Nine in the morning. I have to go to work.

I muddle through the morning ritual (sorry for the pun), and find myself late again for a job that scares me. I can do the job, it's the day-to-day triggering that keeps me timid. The lunch discussion is on the latest horror film, in detail. People seem amused. I get up and go for a walk. When does relief come?

My neighbor has asked me to go to the pharmacy for her. Why am I panicking? The answer comes later in the day. Poison was often a weapon in the cult. I run to my neighbor to make sure she is still breathing. How do I help the little ones see that we do not

cause death, that we don't have the power to destroy life like they had us believe?

Another talk show about multiples, another story on false memories. Another wound in my heart. We thought that once we lived to tell, others would believe, and children would stop being hurt. What a letdown, what a lie. I rock myself at times to steady my racing heart. When do I stop surviving and start living? I am exhausted. I call someone. I go to a meeting. I pray, and finally I sleep.

Day three. Full moons are beautiful at night. I can see the beauty in them, and I almost forget the holocaust I have survived. I can almost smile at the moon. And then a flash comes of a baby drenched in blood, a piercing scream, and maddening laughter. I go to my journal and ask inside, "What do you remember?" I remember everything and nothing.

What do I remember? Smells probably the best. Wet cork, semen, throw-up, shit, piss, dogs, cats, all kinds of animals, burning blood, burning flesh. Screaming, laughter, pain, tears on my face, confusion, lighted hallways, heavy footsteps, whispers, heavy breath, hands in my pajama pants, sweating under my covers, sweating in my closets. Banging my head over and over again against the wall. The toilet seat, enemas, sex, pleasure, pain, orgasm. Scoldings, teachings, preachings, yelling, screaming, hugging, kissing, laughing only at myself. Afraid of being wrong, afraid of being right. Never knowing what time it was. One hour gone by, two hours. Snakes are crawling; bees are stinging; spiders are touching. Dragons are screaming. Three hours, four hours. Rock me to sleep Mommy. Tell me a bed-time story. You're crushing my brain, you're crushing my bones, you're crushing my dreams. Whisky, bourbon, scotch. I smell piss again. Funny pictures in front of my eyes, yellow light, sparks of light. Electric shock, burning my head. Ashes are sifted, bodies are cleansed. I have to clean them up.

Gently I place a blanket around me and cover my feet with my memory slippers. Gently, peacefully I hug myself, and on good days, I let someone else hold me. Once again I am exhausted.

Another expert has claimed there is no such thing as ritual abuse, another case has been denied. I crawl into my bed and under the covers, flashes of the baby still in my mind. I never knew pain could run so deep. I never knew that I could survive so much. If you knew, God, why did You choose for me to be created? I will trust You though. One more day I will trust You.

It begins to rain outside, and silently, inside, an acceptance comes to us. We have our answer. God is crying tears for our pain, and for other survivors. How horrible it must be to see your creation destroy itself out of fear. I can feel God reaching out to me, and in a small way I am comforted. I get up and go the window and smile and wave at the moon. The moon never hurt me, people under the moon did. But not today, and by the Grace of God, not tomorrow.

Day four. I love pets. I love animals. But now I can feel sickness overcome me when I am around dogs. I allow the feelings to come. Part of us needs to let out the pain of being raped by animals. We need to talk about it. Dammit, not this, too. Not another area of my life becoming unsafe, another memory, not more abuse. Animals sicken part of us, we hate them, and we don't care that God has created them. They hurt me.

Someone brought a dog to work today. She is the kind of dog that innocently jumps everywhere. The whole staff thinks she is great, so lovable. I look around and realize that there isn't a face in the crowd that can validate my pain. I hug myself and extend a thought to God. Thanks for listening. One more day down.

Day five. I begin the day reviewing my journal. I want to piece my life back together again. I know I can't demand that it make sense, but still I try. I read a journal entry that explains some of the ways that we survived.

During the time I spent at cult farms, I loved the sunny days because we were even allowed to go out and play a little. It was the first time for me, because at home I spent most of my time in the basement or attic, locked in pain. When the clouds rolled in, I knew it was close to the time when they would bury me alive. I think they liked the way the mud suffocated my nostrils and clogged my ears.

But I was busy preparing my escape. In the few minutes before the rain came, I ran around the farm secretly talking to all the animals. I had seen this over and over again in cartoons, people communicating for help through animals. What subtle message is this relaying about our faith in humans? With no human helpers, I created a world of animal helpers, usually the ones that had been sacrificed. It brought them all back.

And when the rain fell and they lowered me into my grave, telling me that time, like every other time, that this time I was being left to die, I secretly called out to the animals to come and save me. In my mind, I could see them all scurrying to my rescue, especially the rabbits. Their tiny feet worked to free me, and

sometimes it took hours, but I was released. Of course it was a human that removed me, but I knew it was only possible because the animals had worked so hard. I really did hear their feet too; the raindrops became their tiny hooves and paws, constantly beating down on top of me, never leaving my side.

Day six. Sleep, rest, and more sleep. I am exhausted. It is the weekend and I have no desire to move. I know that I should. There is that word again; *should*. The holidays are coming and I can feel the need to plan, to survive.

Esmerlda is lost and confused inside. She wants to know what her new job is. She was the one who delivered notes, both inside and out. She has been telling some of the children who were most fearful that she still delivers notes to our family. They felt relief because the programming taught them that if they stopped communicating we would die. I have talked to Esmerlda and the others, and we have broken communication with our family. I reassure her that we have new people, friends that she can deliver notes to and that we won't die. I feel a sense of imbalance inside. They are wanting to trust and yet they wait patiently until it is safe.

I have chosen to grocery shop, an ordeal that takes sometimes hours, sometimes days. Hopefully I can leave with some essentials. As I get out of the car, a group of guys drive by and yell obscenities. It takes everything in my power not to crawl back into the car, drive home, and eat a can of beans. I make my way through the aisles of the store and the triggers start. If I can just make it through the meats and frozen foods, I might survive it all.

Didn't God create the world in seven days? It feels like an eternity. How could so much happen in such a short period of time? I have made a commitment to heal. It is empowering to accept this statement. No matter what the cost, I will recover. No matter what the truth reveals, I will not stop.

Day seven. I rest and reflect on being a survivor of incest, ritual abuse, and experimental torture and mind control. It almost feels like a dream, a stumble around in the fog. I know what my body says. I know what my parts tell me, but somehow it still seems unbelievable. I am grateful for recovery and awareness. I feel safe in truth, a contradiction to the past. The truth would have killed me then, but today it keeps me alive.

I have begun to move from surviving to living. To me this is the hardest part of recovery: living my life, healing from the survivor guilt, telling myself that I am enough. If today, on the seventh day,

I decide to only breathe, that will be enough. Just because I have survived does not mean I have to save the planet. Maybe God's will for me is to enjoy life.

I have lost my sister, my brother, many children, and countless friends. My childhood was a mask I wore but never experienced. Today I enjoy reading, writing, acting, and dancing. I have begun to reclaim my soul — the greatest revenge. I look to the heavens and smile. Life will always be accessible there. I will be understood and loved. I will be granted peace, unconditionally.

The hardest lesson for me today is to make room for my invisible wheelchair and carry on throughout my day. I believe that survivors are testimonies to the existence of God. Silently I roll myself through the day, sharing what little faith I have with others, embracing all of me.

This evening we ended the day watching Tina Turner in concert on TV. We laughed, we had fun, we sang, we felt joy. A friend called to tell me that a cassette tape I had shared with her had made its way to other recovering people, and they were moved. She called to say thank you. Maybe this is the 'enough' I need, and in the moment that I embraced her praise, life felt accessible.

Chosen for a Special Honor

Annie

I was in my forties when I began to recall childhood ritualized cult abuse. I was overwhelmed by the memories thrashing about in my head and thought I had thoroughly lost my mind. I didn't understand what these strange, appalling images meant. The memories were similar to satanism but different. The robes were white, not red and black, no demons were called forth, and no candles were used. I did recall rings of fire and an altar, then what appeared to be human sacrifice. What were these memories anyway?

I couldn't stand the phrase at church, "Blessed is He who comes in the Name of the Lord." I didn't understand this either until I recalled my father in white robes bringing a plate full of baby garter snakes that the 'congregation' ate live. Since I was considered one of the congregation, I had to partake of this communion.

The memories came faster; each one worse than the one before. I finally got a clue what was going on when I recalled a 'purification ceremony' performed on me. Leeches were placed all over my naked body, while the leader chanted directions specifying the number of leeches to be used and where they were to be placed. The chant described how the leeches were supposed to draw impurities out of my body.

Once I had a name, I did some research. I found out that Baal is an ancient Mesopotamian god, called also Balem. Baal or Balem was known as the child-eating god. Adults were sacrificed under certain circumstances, but children (usually under the age of nine) were the sacrifice most pleasing to Baal. As I recalled more and more, I realized the ceremonies were similar to the Roman Catholic Mass, only performed in reverse. I was surprised to see doctors, businessmen, and bankers, among other prominent people participating in this cult. More men than women attended, and

numerous children, ranging in age from three to thirteen, were present.

I learned that I had been chosen for a special honor. My training was exacting and it included having electrical shock applied frequently to my ears and nose, occasionally on the breast and genitals. I was made to squat in a small wooden box for hours as punishment for crying out in defiance. I was repeatedly beaten in a manner that left no bruises, and anally and vaginally raped by the 'head master.' At age eleven, I was given shots of hormones for several months. Although my menstrual cycle never started, my breast developed rapidly.

I soon learned my special purpose. I was to give birth and sacrifice the child to Baal. The impregnation ceremony was frightening, painful, and totally degrading. All the adults took part in the ceremony. Men and women alike removed their robes. I was tied naked to the altar in gynecological stirrups. Each man put his penis in my rectum three times, then my vagina three times, and my mouth three times. Women used their tongues or fingers. After this a tube of some sort was inserted into my urethra and vagina. My father tried to ejaculate into the tube but that didn't work. The doctor took a plunger-like thing, inserted it into my vagina, and used it with great force. It was my understanding that they wanted an immaculate conception. What a joke! Thirty people rape me in every way possible, and they think they are going to get an immaculate conception.

I remember little of my daughter's birth. I know labor was induced at six months' gestation. What I do remember is being dressed in fine robes and hailed as Queen of Baal. Then I remember my father's hands over mine on the ceremonial dagger. I remember the blood squirting onto my clothing even though my eyes were squeezed shut. I'll never forget the tiny sound my baby made when stabbed in the heart, her last gasp of air. That sound signaled clamorous shouts of joy and celebration. The master then devoured my baby's heart, liver, and eyes. The second-in-command received the lungs and other internal organs. The rest of the tiny baby was then divided into many pieces. The members clawed and shoved to get a piece of the sacrifice. They were like wild dogs fighting over a rotting carcass.

When all settled down, special tools called bone scrapers were distributed. The bones were scraped clean of all flesh and carefully gathered. Even the tiniest pieces of bone were saved and placed with the rest in an ornate silver box. I overheard someone say they would bury the baby in a Christian church, thereby dedicating it to Baal.

I could go on describing different celebrations and activities of the followers of Baal, each as despicable as the other. However, I must use caution in writing this. My husband, children, and I have been harassed by cult members for the past year and a half. They seem to know where we are and what we are doing all the time. I have received death threats and been terrorized in many ways. We have moved to a more secure location, where we screen all telephone calls, lock all doors and windows, and carry protective devices on our persons. The police and telephone company have been unable or unwilling to help us. We figure our greatest safety comes from speaking out. Cult members know that we have shared vital information with trusted friends outside the family, and that they would be prime suspects should any of us disappear or die in an unconventional manner.

This is not to say that I live unafraid. I suffer from severe depression and have been hospitalized twice for trying to take my own life. I have hundreds of cigarette burns on my grossly obese body. I have a list of physical ailments, mostly stress-induced, that reads like a litany.

Part of my recovery has been doing just what I am doing now. I get on my computer and write. I write to other survivors, to newsletters. I submit articles for anthologies and magazines. I write terrible poetry that only I enjoy. I have written to companies complaining of advertising in poor taste, and to my congressman urging laws for better mental health treatment.

I find that art is a great way to express what I cannot always say in words. I am by no means an artist, but I enjoy working with charcoals and watercolors. I listen to relaxation tapes; my favorite is one of ocean sounds. I'm fortunate to have two little granddaughters that I can visit almost any time I desire. When I'm feeling down or frightened, I visit them and get to see that innocence does exist in this world.

If I'm having bad flashbacks, I reach out to someone who understands and talk out what is going on. If I can't reach anyone, I write in my journal. It helps put a focus on the craziness swirling in my head.

I have been dealing with the cult issues for a long time, yet I still find myself doubting these memories. A few weeks ago I was in a special recovery center. Another of the clients was sharing her art work with a few of us. Suddenly, I got all excited! I saw a familiar object in the painting! Just then a third member of our little group asked what that object was. The artist and I said in unison, "That's a bone scraper." Our friend asked what it was used for, and again we answered in unison, "It scrapes all the flesh off

the bones and leaves them completely clean." I was finally validated.

The artist came from thousands of miles away, and she drew a cult tool similar to the one I had drawn months ago and shown to my therapist. I no longer have any doubts that my memories are indeed real. They are inhuman and painful, but they are real, and now I can really work on the healing of my wounded heart and soul.

Addictions Masked My Pain

Paul

My name is Paul, I'm an incest survivor, and a survivor of ritual abuse. My story is a story of addiction, a story of running away from pain.

I was born and raised in England and lived there until I was twenty-two. I don't have complete memories of my childhood, very little before the age of ten and a lot of large gaps. I do know I felt different from other children. I felt dirty inside, didn't know why, and was afraid to look. This made me shy and bashful and made communication with others very difficult. I was afraid to share anything of myself because I thought if others knew what I was really like inside they would avoid me like the plague.

The real world was a painful place for me. I avoided it as much as possible, mostly by living in a fantasy world of my own. I read children's adventure stories, and spent hours daydreaming of myself in the hero's role. These daydreams often seemed more real to me than my physical world.

When I was about fourteen, I discovered masturbation, and immediately practiced it in a compulsive way. I masturbated literally for hours every day, in my room, during classes in school, at the movies, everywhere. I had feelings of guilt and inferiority about this, which led to more withdrawal and more masturbation, in a vicious circle.

I started drinking beer at seventeen, got drunk the first time about a year later, and was immediately an alcoholic. I thought that booze solved all my problems, enabling me to do all the things that were otherwise impossible: go to parties, make conversation, ask girls to dance.

The alcoholism and sex addiction were the controlling forces all my adult life, until five years ago. (I'm in my fifties now.) Looking back, I see the addictive behavior as a desperate attempt to hold down the pain of the abuse, of which I had absolutely no conscious memories all this time.

My drinking career took me all over the world looking for a geographical cure. When I was thirty-eight, back in England, I hit bottom with my drinking and lost everything. I moved to Germany and eventually got into AA, but continued to practice the sex addiction. It took another twelve years to get sexually sober, with the help of Sexaholics Anonymous. Almost immediately, the incest memories started to surface, along with nightmares of being tortured and sexually abused by a group of adults dressed in long robes with hoods, like the Ku Klux Klan. These pictures started to haunt me in the daytime, too.

This was a turbulent time in my life. I was doing everything I could to help my recovery; individual therapy, survivor support groups (Incest Survivors Anonymous), networking with other survivors, reading everything I could find on the subject. I still had no clear pictures of what had happened, or who the perpetrators were. My therapist suggested trying a modified form of scream therapy. I began to get feelings of deep pain, like a bottomless pit, but fear still blocked the memories. Finally, a breakthrough came, and I re-lived the experience of being raped by my father at about five years old. It devastated me. The pain seemed unbearable.

I became confused, sometimes had difficulty in distinguishing between the pain of the past and the reality of the present. My wife could not deal with this situation, became aggressive, and tried to stop me from working on the incest. I had to leave her in order to survive. This left me completely alone, adding to my pain.

The vague memories and dreams of ritual abuse started getting stronger. My therapist suggested that the experience must have happened in a previous life because, "This kind of thing does not happen any more." I never believed in re-incarnation, but his message became attractive to me.

At a workshop, I met a woman who explores body memories of previous incarnations. By asking questions and testing my body reactions, she claimed to have established that the ritual abuse happened several centuries ago in Africa. She then led me back into the past, beyond birth, to this time. It was a weird experience, some strange feelings came up, and I seemed to be acting as if it really was happening again. I still do not know how much, if any, of this experience to believe. I do know that the nightmares and feelings of being haunted by the ritual abuse went away completely. I had some misgivings, but decided to believe that it had happened in a past life.

My main focus for the next year was recovery from the incest from my family of origin, including emotional sexual abuse from my mother. I finally confronted my father on the telephone and

proposed a meeting to talk about it. He refused, saying that nothing had happened, and that there was nothing to discuss. I sent him a series of letters telling how I came to know about the incest, what it means to me, and the effect it has had on my life. He wrote back, saying that he now believes that I was abused, how terrible it all is, but that he did not do it and that he suspected my grandfather. I believe that I have now achieved closure with him. I have broken off all contact and have practically no feelings for him at all.

The dreams and feelings about the ritual abuse began to come back. Always the same picture; I was a small child, lying on the ground, surrounded by hooded figures. There is a lot of blood, my blood. Sometimes in the dream a woman (my mother?) cleaned me up afterwards with a towel.

I was at a survivors' meeting where a woman identified herself as a ritual abuse survivor. Something went click in my mind. I thought, "That's what I am, too." I started to identify myself as an ritual abuse survivor in meetings. I know now that the ritual abuse happened in this life, and not in a previous one.

Soon after, I had a detailed dream. I was in a situation with a woman (my mother?) which seemed sexual, although nothing happened. Then we were both very small, children. A group of adults dressed as Arabs burst into the room. They said, "We're going to play The Game tonight." (This is a phrase out of my childhood. I still get a chill down my spine when I think of it.) The Game consisted of forcing the children to torture each other by biting deep into the flesh. I refused. They tried to force me, but I twisted away. Then they said, "If you won't do it, she will have to do it to you." She agreed, and started towards me. I awoke, screaming and sweating.

I know I often have terrible nightmares, but have no memories of them. I began to have problems with toothaches and with pieces breaking off my teeth. The dentist could find nothing wrong, and suggested it might be due to grinding my teeth when asleep. He made a special protection plate to wear at night, and that solved the problem.

This is as far as I have come. I still don't know exactly what happened, or who did it to me, but some pieces of the puzzle are coming together. I remember that my grandmother was very superstitious and always bowed three times to the new moon, and that my mother and an aunt often imitated this behavior. Sometimes, if I am in a family type situation on a Saturday evening, before supper, I suddenly get a feeling of terror, deep in my belly. There is a place in the country where I often go on my

bike, where there are some dead trees. If I am there in the early evening, I often get the same feeling. These are all clues to what happened. I believe that more will be revealed, when I am far enough along in my recovery to be able to deal with it.

I have been putting off disclosing what I know because it feels as if I have some kind of programming telling me that something horrible will happen if I don't keep my mouth shut. I believe it is important to talk about it, to be able to recover, and go on with what's left of my life. I am not able to discuss it with my family, as I have no contact with them any more. I'm still separated from my wife, and will probably get divorced soon. I mention the ritual abuse to a very few friends, and then only in general terms. I even have problems discussing it at incest survivors' meetings as I'm afraid it may be too heavy for some people, and I do not want to hurt them. I think that we ritual abuse survivors really need a forum where we can share our experiences.

My life today is not a rose garden. I often feel sad and lonely, and I really miss the companionship of a relationship. I know the most important thing is to keep the faith, to maintain sobriety from my addictions with the help of my Twelve-Step meetings, and to pursue my recovery every way possible. I believe it is possible to recover from this kind of abuse, and I have faith that my life will improve if I continue to do my work.

Please Don't Misunderstand

Evelyn Louise

When I was thirty-five, I had what most women want; a loving husband, two good children, a job I liked, and a lot of extra activities. I tutored children in computer usage, helped slow readers, was president of the PTA, worked for the school board, played piano, sewed, knitted, camped, and was very involved with my own and my husband's families. All of that changed within a short period of time.

It started with episodes of chest pain, shortness of breath, and a terrible fear that I was dying. I had all the cardiac tests there were. We could find no reason for the attacks, and my depression grew every time a test came back negative. The consistent proof of good physical health was something I didn't know how to handle.

My internist wanted me to see a psychiatrist, and although I didn't take the suggestion well, I agreed to one meeting. The psychiatrist was very nice, pleasant, soothing, and totally infuriating. He didn't seem to believe that I already had everything I needed. When our session was over, he suggested that I might be having panic attacks, and prescribed a medication. I went home and began the medication, but my depression increased. One evening I knew that if I didn't get immediate help, I would kill myself. I called the psychiatrist and was admitted to a locked psychiatric unit that same night.

I was sure that it would only take a few days to get my medication straightened out, but I spent a week in the locked unit, mostly crying and staring at the walls.

As soon as my doctor felt that I would be safe from myself, I was moved to another unit, where they practiced intensive therapy. Even though the hospital therapy groups were interesting and somewhat helpful, I continued to feel out of place. As a nurse, I felt I should be helping everyone else, and was told on more than one occasion that I wasn't a nurse in that hospital, only another patient. It was a very frustrating time for me.

One day in relaxation, a group designed to teach us how to let go of tension and anxiety, the group leader was giving us instructions to go to a beach in our mind, listen to the waves, feel the breeze. The next thing I knew, I was lying in the hallway surrounded by staff. I had gotten up, run out of the room, and lost consciousness.

Over the next month, that happened a lot. I began to have nightmares about my grandfather, but I could never grasp exactly what was so frightening about the dreams. Then one day I had what is known as a flashback, a nightmare while you're not asleep. It was so real that during the experience I would have sworn I was 'there.' When it was over, I was cowering in the corner and one of the nurses was trying to get me to tell what I had remembered.

What I had remembered was my grandfather taking me in the middle of the night down to the beach and raping me. I was about eleven at the time, the same age my daughter was at the time I remembered. (I later found out that repressed memories can be easily triggered by a seemingly simple coincidence like this one.)

I began remembering a lot of things. I was able to add my own father and my grandfather's wife to that first memory. I remembered things that I was so embarrassed about and ashamed of that I couldn't even tell my doctor. I wrote them down; he read them, and, if he insisted, we discussed them. Eventually, I had over two hundred and fifty pages of written memories, recovered in small pieces, in fits and starts. I began to find cuts and scratches on my arms and legs. Obviously they were my own acts, but I couldn't remember doing them and I didn't understand why I would.

I had a very difficult time believing that my memories could be true. A lot of questions ran through my mind. Why I hadn't remembered before; why I hadn't always remembered; what if I was just crazy? My parents' insistence that my memories had to be wrong only made the memories more difficult to live with. I believed that my parents wouldn't want to hurt me; after all, I was their child. It's a crazy thing to live through, and with no confirmation of my memories, it was hard to believe them and to trust in myself.

Then one night I received a phone call from my grandfather. He had heard I was in the hospital, thought he knew what I was thinking about, and wanted to know why it would bother me now. He insisted they had never really hurt me, and it obviously hadn't bothered me at the time. It was such a shock to hear from him. He had admitted that 'something' had happened, and even mentioned that 'others' were involved, but said that it didn't matter because

they had to do 'what was needed' and I 'belonged to them' anyway. At least he let me know that I wasn't crazy. The memories were horrible; the emotional pain almost unbearable, but I wasn't losing my mind.

It was the beginning of a long process, one that is still taking place and has been for almost ten years. During that time, I've discovered a lot about myself and my childhood, things that I would never have believed if I had been told they had happened to me. I had a history of on-going almost non-stop sexual abuse, punctuated with ritualistic abuse, that lasted until I was old enough to move out of my parents' house and live on my own.

One of the first things I learned was that the majority of people do not want to believe that anything happened. It is easier for my mother to continue to deny knowing anything about any of my abuse. It was simpler for some of the hospital staff to believe that I was 'faking it' or 'acting out' or 'hallucinating' than to concede that the terrible things I remembered could possibly be true. Even my husband had a very difficult time, especially when the memories began to include my father. And my siblings still refuse to accept any mention of anyone other than my grandfather.

Most people find it very threatening to believe, especially when it has happened to someone they actually know and possibly care about. The only people who initially acknowledged the truth of my memories were my grandfather, who has always been mentally ill and feels he did nothing wrong, and my doctor, who was a godsend. He kept me sane when even I couldn't believe what I knew in my heart was true.

It's very painful and difficult to learn that the people who should have loved me and taken care of me were the same ones who allowed and participated in the abuse. The more my childhood unfolded before me, the more the memories included my parents, my grandparents, and others, the more trouble I had in staying with therapy. There were times that it would have been much easier to believe that I was mentally disturbed in some way, that I was the crazy one, than to face the fact that I was not loved or wanted; that I was only needed for their other purposes.

I realized that losing consciousness was a way of escape. Whenever the memories became overwhelming, down I would go. And I always seemed to hit my right temple in the process. Eventually, I connected that to a time I was about 14 years old.

We were vacationing at my grandfather's, as we did almost every summer. I was out on the sand looking for shells when one of his friends grabbed me and shoved me into his car. As he drove off

down the beach, he reached over to lay his hand on my thigh. "Don't worry," he said. "Your dear granddad said we could spend the afternoon together." When I protested, he added that he had paid my grandfather a lot to take me, and I'd better do what I was told. At that point, I twisted in the seat and kicked him in the side of the head. I must have kicked him hard because he slumped onto the steering wheel and the car went out of control, hitting a tree. As soon as it stopped, I jumped out and started running back to the motel, never looking back.

After I got there, my grandfather's wife gave me some tea made from something she grew in her herb garden to calm me down. And then my grandfather came in to tell me that his friend had been killed in a freak accident down the beach. He said that he knew I had been involved, and he would protect me from the police. Somehow, I was always to blame for everything that happened. I know now that it was an easy way to tie me to the group and its activities.

They gave me choices, such as which other child should be abused, or how. It wouldn't really matter what I said, because all the children present would be hurt in some way, but, if I was forced to decide, whatever I said made it my fault.

They told me, "But this is what you wanted," or "We're only doing this for you," or "If you would do what we want, this wouldn't be necessary."

There was the time my grandfather's wife was holding my kitten and when I asked for it, she told me I couldn't have it because I had not done what I was told. I think I was very young because I started to cry. That's when she said, "Okay, you can come and get it, but I've had to punish it because you've been a bad girl." And when I took it from her arms, its head rolled off onto the floor. I began to believe that if only I could be good enough, then nothing bad would ever happen. I tried being good enough for most of my life, always trying to do everything I could for everybody who asked, but it was never enough. I couldn't stop the terrible things from happening.

They made me participate in the abuse of animals and other children, then warned me that if I told I would be arrested, or I would be killed, or my family would be killed. Once they told me that if I didn't obey my baby sister would be thrown to the dogs. It wasn't an idle threat. They kept several large dogs, which were used in sexual activities and which were fed the remains of a sacrifice. The next morning, they took whatever was left out on a boat and dropped it into the ocean.

When a child is small and dependent upon the very people who are perpetrating the crimes, there is no way out. There was no one I could have told who would have believed me, no one who would not have returned me to my parents, and I had no way of knowing that other adults didn't behave this way. Slowly and surely, I was drawn into the group.

I believe that the power of the mind to protect itself is miraculous. I could have truly lost my sanity or my life. Instead I adapted as best I could to the uncertainty, terror, and double-binds that I was placed in.

But there were lasting effects. Until recently, I have never been able to trust other people. I relied totally on myself to do everything, knowing in my heart that I would be disappointed if I believed that someone else would help me, or that the price of accepting help would be higher than I cared to deal with. I didn't know why I believed that to be true, I just did. As I recovered more and more memories, this lack of ability to trust became more reasonable to me.

One time I was hung upside down from a rope for hours, surrounded with chanting and darkness, and spun around. When they finally took me down, I was barely conscious of someone carefully holding me in her arms. It was my grandfather's wife, and she was so kind and gentle that I was sure she had come to help me.

Then she laid me on the table they used, stroked my hair, and said she knew the punishment had been rough, but she hoped I had learned my lesson. She massaged my arms and legs and said I belonged to them. She gently kissed my forehead and told me I just had to do what they needed and wanted. She looked into my eyes, taking my face in her hands, and reminded me that no one could ever love me the way they loved me. She asked me if I would like a nice warm bath and some sleep. When I said yes, she said "Then be a good girl, and we'll let you do that as soon as we are done." Then all the men and women in the room took off their robes and, one at a time, climbed onto the table to molest me. The combination of professed love and physical pain made it impossible for me to believe what anyone said.

The older I got, the more involved the abuse became. When I was thirteen I was ready to be initiated into the group itself. Until then, the abuse had only occurred with my parents and grandparents. That night, I was awakened, dressed in a white robe, and led into a room in my grandfather's basement. The room was lit only with candles and there were many other people there. In the center of the room was a table clear of everything but a candle and a small bowl.

I remember feeling dizzy; it's possible that I had been lightly drugged or sleep-deprived. I could hear a baby crying under the loud and rhythmic chanting of the swaying participants. My grandfather's wife came out of a little room I hadn't noticed. She was wearing a black robe with a hood like everyone else, but she looked different, more important than the others. The chanting stopped as soon as she appeared, and she was carrying the baby I had heard.

She laid the little boy on the table, and withdrew an ornate knife from somewhere within her robe. I was pushed toward her, and she wrapped her right arm around me, holding me close. "This is your night. This is for your glory. This will give you power," and with that, she placed my hand on the knife handle, covered it with hers, and plunged it into the baby's chest. It made a horrible noise and I could feel it pass through his chest wall. The blood began to pour out of the wound, his face turned blue, then purple, then gray, and the crying stopped.

Everyone in the room began to chant again, and the baby's blood was caught in the bowl. I don't know if I staggered or what happened, but someone else was holding me as I was forced to watch her slice open his chest and remove his heart. Then she quickly cut it into small pieces, and all the others ate a piece of the heart, and drank of the blood. As I stood numb and horrified, someone forced open my mouth, and I was fed this grisly form of communion. The rest of the blood was poured over my head, as the chanting continued.

My blood-splattered white robe was exchanged for a black one. I was stretched on the table, and a man with a goat's head came into the room and raped me. After I had been pronounced 'the master's new bride' everyone kissed me, and then I was forgotten as they all engaged in various sexual activities. After that I knew what they were capable of, and I no longer gave them any fight although most of the time I wasn't really 'present' for what was happening.

(Sometimes I still wonder if the baby was real? If I had been drugged? And yet, I know that these things really do happen, that it is easier than most would want to believe to kill a baby and make the body disappear, especially one born for that purpose.)

When I was older, possibly fifteen or sixteen, I was taken to the beach again, only this time it was very early morning. There in the sand at the edge of the water I could see the head and shoulders of a young woman. They had buried her there, facing the road, and left her to drown when the tide came in, able to hear the ocean coming nearer and nearer, and unable to do anything about it.

I was told that she had threatened to inform the police about the group's activities and that this was her punishment. No one was allowed to leave the group after initiation. After they dug her out of the sand, they put her in a box buried in the beach, and they put me in there with her body. It was 'a lesson I needed to learn.' All I had to do to get out was swear that I would never tell, and then take a knife and cut her throat.

Eventually, I did. I knew by then that they meant what they said and that I could be as easily killed as she had been. It was another way of assuring my silence and making me an accomplice in a murder, another way of keeping me in line with their wishes.

As my therapy progressed, I went through several periods of extreme depression and attempted suicide three times. I had visual hallucinations of my grandfather standing in my room, auditory ones of chanting, and tactile ones where I would feel someone touch me even though I was alone. I couldn't believe that I would ever feel better, that I deserved to get well, or that anyone would want to be around me if they knew the truth. All the lessons I had learned about taking the blame for whatever happened were still very much in force. I felt only shame and despair, and strongly believed that if they found out I had told the secret, I would die.

There were many things to keep secret. Memories of 'just' being sexually abused; times of watching other little girls be raped; shocks from an electric wire and injuries from being assaulted with objects; being auctioned to the highest bidder among my grandfather's friends; using my church's sacred objects in profane ways; vaginal stitches given to me by one of the members after a particularly savage evening; the crucifixion of a young boy; and the abortion of a baby I was carrying at age fourteen that I believe was my grandfather's although it could have been almost anyone's.

The group that my parents and grandparents took part in was composed of well-educated, sophisticated people. I believe that they were able to deliberately induce different personality complexes, although they may not have thought of it in that way. They called me by different names, depending on what they expected me to do. Linny Lou was present whenever I was locked in the closet or the box in the beach. Lindy took over whenever there was a sacrifice to be made, and Rachel became a willing member of the group, probably to be an abuser rather than the abused. There were others, each with a special purpose. Some held specific feelings, such as anger or hate. Some seem to have special purposes, such as Sister Mary Therese, who counteracted Rachel and developed at the same time; Jeannie, who was around for all the homosexual

abuse; or Mama Lynn, who took care of all the little child personalities within me.

I know that multiplicity is hard to understand and even harder to believe. If friends, family, and others could grasp how horrendous violent acts of sexual and ritual abuse are for a child, maybe they could imagine why that child's mind looks for escape from the pain and terror. It is an excellent way to survive the inescapable; it only becomes a problem later, when the situation no longer calls for such a drastic solution, but the reflex to split is so well learned that it automatically kicks in.

As I became more and more comfortable with my doctor, he began to receive notes that only I could have written but which I didn't remember writing. I began to find myself in places I couldn't remember going to. Once I found an ornate knife and a satanic bible in my car. Other times I realized I was holding the phone without a memory of having talked to anyone. I also heard voices, terrible voices, that told me to hurt myself or others. Sometimes all I heard was the sound of a small child crying or screaming.

In spite of the evidence, it took me a long time to believe my multiplicity. But after the initial shock of the discovery faded, it made sense to me. I had been aware that there were long periods of time that I couldn't account for. Even in my childhood, I was accused of things I couldn't remember doing. There were people I had met who called me by another name and insisted that they knew me. I found notes to myself from myself, explaining certain memories. Some parts of me were helpful and wanted to integrate with one another. Other parts were hostile and only wanted me dead.

I was hospitalized again trying to deal with this new development. One nurse on the staff refused to believe in the diagnosis of multiple personalities because she didn't believe that the condition itself existed. She accused me of making it up for attention. Another nurse was sure that my memories couldn't possibly be real, that I was only hallucinating, and that I could cure myself of my delusions if I really wanted to. The unwillingness or inability of some of the staff to understand and help me only made the adjustment and therapy more difficult.

But my doctor and I continued to work with the memories, and as each segment held by another part of me became understandable, that part wholly became one with the rest of me. I began to literally pull myself back together. Over the next few years, I spent days, weeks, and months at a time in the hospital trying to stay alive and learn to live with my past.

I found expression in poetry, prose, drawing, and reading everything I could about abusive rituals, child abuse, and multiplicity. I began to understand that I always needed to be in control because I had none until I was an adult and moved away from my family. My doctor gave me that control, placing the decision about whether or not I would be hospitalized and the length of those hospitalizations in my hands.

At different times during all of this, my husband and I went through marriage therapy to help us both cope with the changes I was making in my life and to help us adjust to the differences between before and now. We also went as a family so that our children would understand and be able to cope.

I tried to interest my parents in therapy, but they were adamant that nothing was wrong with them, and refused. My brother and sisters began to avoid me and insisted that I could not be around their children because I was 'too sick.' At first, I believed that I could eventually make everything all right. Now I know that the only person I can change is myself, and I'm learning to live without my family of origin. It is very hard to watch them, knowing that they will probably always live with the same patterns of behavior. But I finally recognize that I needed to separate from them for my own and my family's health, and that's beginning to feel right.

Learning about my past even explained simple things, like my inability to view violence on the news. Whenever I see what people can do to each other, I am shamed and deeply saddened. I cannot watch horror movies because I know that if someone can imagine a terrible act, someone else will be able to actually carry it out.

My biggest problem now is of a spiritual nature. I cannot seem to believe that God would ever forgive me. My belief in God's existence is strong, as it is for many people exposed to constant assurances that there is no God. If they were not sure of God's existence, they would not have had the overwhelming need to counteract those feelings with worship of evil and to try to prove that their god is the most strong and powerful.

I would like to be able to go church and feel a sense of community without being frightened, the way I could when I was younger, when all my memories of those experiences were blocked. (My mother had insisted that we attend until we were fourteen, and it's one of the few things she did that I'm grateful for.) I seem to be making progress; at least I'm no longer afraid to enter the church. But the work is slow, and I want to be well yesterday.

Please don't misunderstand. I have changed with all the hard work and time spent in therapy. I still have occasional flashbacks, nightmares, and moments of lost time when I'm not aware of my surroundings, but I believe it is just spacing out and not splitting into other personalities. I seem to have totally integrated all the personalities and fragments, and as a result I feel things more fully than ever before. I've learned to trust, although I've also discovered that trust can be easily shaken, and I need to be more discriminating in what I quickly believe. I rarely black out any more, and I no longer cut on myself.

I've been able to go back to work, and most of the time that feels good. I still find myself wanting to do everything perfectly, but at the same time being afraid that if I am that good I will be expected to do even more. I have yet to totally believe that I have control over what I do and don't do, and can say "no"; but I'm working on that too.

My immediate family is doing well, and our relationships are close and caring. We love and fight, just like most families, and I've learned that this is a normal way to live, not something to be feared. I can finally believe that I will not be abandoned because of my past, or because I feel angry, or have a bad day. I feel safe in the love of my husband and children and good friends instead of wondering how long it will last, and whether it is a real feeling. I'm learning to be honest about my feelings with other people, and not worry too much about the fear that they won't like me. I'm learning to be a 'normal' person. It's the most difficult thing I have ever done.

When I'm under a lot of stress, I still have times that I hear the voices, or lose time, but those times are getting less frequent. It's going to take more time before that behavior is gone entirely. It may never be gone entirely. That's just something I need to keep working on, and hope the improvement continues.

A Time-Share in Hell

Alex

It is hard for me to encapsulate my crawl through a childhood mined with ritual abuse. I feel as if I would not have room in one million pages, in one hundred thousand years, to impress on people what ritual abuse really means to my life. At the same time, the very concept of writing anything, filling a blank page with myself, horrifies me.

So let me simply state: my name is Alex. I am a woman and a survivor of ritual torture. To me, this has meant developing creative coping strategies that have increased my drive to change things, to make the world a more humane place. It also means horrendous pain, masochism, rage, brainwashing, terror, and mistrust. It means seeing the world, not in balanced blacks, whites, and shades of grey, but in sinister tones of black and red.

At four years old, I could have been a madam, running the kinkiest brothel this side of Texas. I could have illustrated to behavioral psychologists how effective mind control can really be. And yet I had a very limited view of my own life, for I am a multiple.

Today, a hundred and five of us survive together, attempting to piece together our scattered mutual past, while each of us grows and reaches into the future.

The Council speaks: Our First Child was born in the mid-seventies into a hippie culture that was striving to find its identity. Her father, inappropriate in his perception of age and ability, demanded the wisdom of age from his child, causing dissociation of positive and negative characters in the child before the age of two.

Daniel was introduced into her family's commune when the First Child was two and a half. Daniel, a cult member from youth, led her into his satanic reality. An abusive situation intensified, both at home and in the cult, and the First Child was forced into hiding. A hundred and five others, with Alex in the lead as the dissociated 'good' of the original child, were created as separate

entities to take her place in the world. They were quickly organized into a system that was functional and undetectable.

small one speaks: Sometimes I wonder what's worse. Ritual abuse? We knew what was expected. Or rather neglect at the hands of those around us?

Rachel speaks: The cult manipulated multiple personality syndrome. They knew we existed. So we had to cover up as much as we could; we didn't want them to know too much, right? That meant trying to get help had to be done real carefully.

Frankie speaks: For me, the psychological and ideological ramifications of the cult are far more devastating than the physical pain I experienced. Pain, even physical threats of annihilation, means very little. What person in poverty or war cannot claim similar experiences? What is it about the cult that spawns polyfragmented multiplicity?

It is the brilliance. The doublethink. The 'art' of pain, the 'art' of power. The cult did not accept idiots into their upper echelons. If they were all psychotic, it would be easier to swallow. But they had a complex ideology that they betrayed you into believing.

Only through the dissociation of non-present alters were we able to hold onto humanity.

Fred speaks: We are still reminded daily of what we are 'supposed' to believe by object programming. Authority figures, hairbrushes, mirrors, lights, lighters all set off programming chains.

Naahmah speaks: They get you high on power.

Marge speaks: I What you're sellin'
 I'm not buyin'
 So don't come 'round no more
 You want me to buy
 A time-share in hell,
 But what satan never gave me
 Was a happy childhood.

On Memories and How We Have Them

It was not until my sister disclosed sexual abuse that I had any inkling of my history. Certainly the signs were there. I was a compulsive liar to make up for time lost. I was shy, self-hating, sometimes manic. Throughout my life I have battled anorexia and bulimia as well as overeating. I was intelligent, and yet found it

hard to concentrate due to dizzy spells and constant accompanying panic. I was obsessed with pagan and witchcraft symbols. (The cult, according to its own teachings, has common Druidic ancestry with modern witchcraft, and was a faction fighting against Druidic incorporation into Catholicism. Therefore both wiccan and Catholic symbols were utilized as lower level cult symbols.)

When my sister brought accusations against my stepfather, I felt some support for those haunting fears that had pursued me throughout my life, often causing me to place knives under my bed, or to stay awake through nights of torturous terror.

I entered into therapy on vague suspicions, without my family's knowledge. Thank god my therapist was open-minded, for a year later SCREAM, my resident four-year-old philosopher, appeared in therapy and introduced herself. I realized, with the help of my counselor, that much of the time spent in her office was not mine.

Now, memories come and then fade, like incandescent dreams. More often than abreactions of abuse, I am remembering times when young that I would awake with a snap in a foreign situation. By the time I was ten, my internal orchestra had created anecdotal time for me; when I was not present, my life was translated into a set of anecdotes that were passed on to me. Although I could not actually remember an incident, the sentence "John and I walked to the store" created the illusion of continuity. During abusive times, the anecdotes were almost entirely fictionalized. Hence, my compulsive lying.

With me today is the constant threat of primal terror. As I work and carve myself into the world, I constantly feel the backwards pull of time. Anecdotal memory no longer works for me. Although I appear knowledgeable of what SCREAM or Suzanne have done, I have begun to search for emotional continuity that just isn't there.

But in searching for my own emotions, I am often pulled into screaming rage, depression, and fear that makes me crazy-feeling. This is especially bad during program dates, when my grip on present reality almost completely dissolves. My life then is a series of abreactions, sometimes anecdotal in format, and sometimes so horrendously real that time seems to be an insubstantial screen that barely marks the difference between past and present.

Rain speaks: A match is lit. A scrape of the flame spark, a flash of illuminative brilliance. And then the picture fades, leaving only light ghosts. What I have seen scares me. What scares me most is that out there, in the dark, it still breathes fire.

Joey speaks: Abreactions are shit. The more people who were there, the more three-D, real, the memory. It's like building a cel

for animation. Each person carries a color. Or looking with two eyes gives you depth. Try looking with twenty. It's fucking scary what you see.

X speaks: We got abuse everywhere. The thing about ritual abuse is that it both heightens and dulls sensitivity to other stuff. The biological father and stepmother would go on tirades against us, triggering and reinforcing cult stuff. Their tirades also strengthened cult ties for some of us; at least we belonged *somewhere*. At the same time, whatever they did meant nothing. Shit. We'd seen way worse.

On Healing and Coping

What makes life most difficult right now is that we are in a constant state of dissociation. Being dissociated is being unable to snap out of a dense, fuzzy haze that descends over life as a whole. It is similar to being caught staring into space and attempting to refocus your thoughts to the here and now. But for every step back into reality, there are hundreds of levels of fog to fight through. As I write this now, the paper and pen seem unreal. There is a discontinuity between one second and another.

I know for myself that healing does not mean integration. Each of us has grown beyond the boundaries of the First Child. Healing, for me, is the cooperation of the system in the enjoyment of life, as whole people able to experience our potentials. No one I've met on the inside, so far, has been one-dimensional.

Frankie speaks: The decision we have made not to integrate is an unpopular one. Multiplicity is seen by the psychological professions as a disorder. For us, multiplicity is our ultimate creativity, an asexual reproduction of sorts. When I was born, I was an archetype, the holder of rage. Now Alex feels her own rage, and I experience a full range of emotions. Love, anger, pathos, sadness, depression, joy, femininity, all. To combine myself and Alex would be to necessarily limit all that I have become. It would be a death.

Fred speaks: Sometimes the hardest thing to overcome is that we are great at being functional. We were patched up so well that it is hard to reach the abuse and own it as our own.

SCREAM speaks: I want to get better and heal so that we can do more stuff without me wanting to bite people. I don't wanna bite *everybody*, but sometimes I get real, real mad. I wanna get better so I don't have to think of adult solutions and I can just play. I wish my therapist could just make it better, but she says she can't.

Girl speaks: I want to someday feel as if it were a good thing we survived and stop wishing that they had just left us as a corpse.

Marge speaks: II Today we live life in many
Part harmony
Thankless to you
'Cuz what you are sellin'
We ain't buyin'
'Cuz all we want is
A happy childhood.

Bridge to the Past

Autumn Knight

Daytime, 1972

I'm sleepy. This morning they herded us into the bus again. I don't know how the grownups can be so awake after all they did last night. We are driving over the water on a large, ugly steel bridge. I hate all bridges but especially this one. It's always reminded me of a dinosaur's skeleton. It feels like we are driving into the mouth and through the ribs of a giant beast.

The air in the bus feels dead. I look out of the window. There is nothing but grey for miles and miles. I feel hopeless. The tiniest girl in the group begins to cry. She is pink and plump with wide green eyes and soft white ringlets.

"Shut up!" Crazy Eyes orders. "Shut up or else you're going in the water!" He is one of the leaders and he is always yelling.

We drive from the bridge onto a narrow road, pine trees hedge one side and grey water the other. We pull onto an even smaller road that carries us to our destination in the middle of nowhere.

There is a truck waiting for us at the abandoned gas station. We get off the bus. The air outside is balmy and it tastes salty. I know we aren't that far from the water. I want to run, but the tall trees surround me like soldiers.

A scrawny hobo is escorted out of the dilapidated gas station. His hands are bound, he is blindfolded and gagged, prepared for execution. He stumbles as if he were drunk. Crazy Eyes kicks him to the ground and says, "Listen carefully. This is what will happen to any of you who betray us." He kicks the frail man again and screams, "Judas! Traitor!"

Not wanting to see, I stare down at the oyster shells that pave the ground beneath my feet. I don't see, but I hear the lighter click. I hear the cruel laughter and the muffled moans. I don't see, but I smell the gasoline. I smell the stench of human skin and hair burning.

Fear is grey, the color of storm clouds. The uninterrupted grey of the water, the steel bridge and the late summer sky. Fear hangs over my head like a sword eternally threatening to come down.

Rush Hour, 1989

I sit alone in my car, stranded at the side of the road because for two days I've been afraid to go to a gas station. I feel stupid and ashamed. I don't know why I cannot bear the smell of gasoline. Cars speed past me. I sit here sobbing. The gas gauge reads empty.

Doing Time

Veronica Monet

I am a ritual abuse survivor. No matter how many times I say those words, I never feel comfortable with them. I have always associated ritual abuse with satanic cults and/or some hideous torture my parents could never be guilty of. But, much against my will, I found myself attending twelve-step meetings for ritual abuse survivors a couple of years ago. I stopped going after about a year, because I just couldn't take any more.

I still call myself a ritual abuse survivor. How could I deny the fact that I identified with the people in those rooms? Ritual abuse is the only phrase I have found to describe my childhood succinctly.

My parents seemed normal enough, at least on first glance. They identified as Christians; my mother was a homemaker, my father a welder. The church my mother attended is considered a cult by most people, but of course that wasn't what I was told as a child. I just knew that Mom's church was the one right church and that outsiders were not to be trusted. I wasn't allowed to attend church with my mother until I was fourteen. Dad wanted his girls at home with him at all times. We couldn't go anywhere, not even the grocery store, with anyone except Dad. Not even with Mom.

Dad didn't let my sister and me attend public school. Initially, he didn't want us to walk to the bus stop in our neighborhood for fear of race riots. Soon afterwards, he moved our family into a travel trailer so we could leave in the dead of night if the law came to enroll us in school.

The law never came. The school board required us to be tested once a year to make sure we were as smart as the other kids. We were always a grade ahead of the kids our age, and I was a straight-A student. Once we were on good terms with the school board, we continued to live in the trailer, but it stayed parked in the same place for a long time. Then he refused to let us attend school because we would have been exposed to sex education, which was a communist plot to overthrow the government.

It wasn't just the public school attendance, either. There was the cleanliness thing. At first, Dad refused to let us eat at Grandma's house because she was too dirty. Then we couldn't eat at any of our relatives' houses or at restaurants. Then we couldn't eat with our fingers, and Mom had to wash the lettuce just so. Then Dad enforced certain rituals for brushing our teeth, drying off with bath towels, making toast, etc..

I remember enduring long lectures while he demonstrated the proper way of doing these mundane activities. For instance, when making toast, the bread wrapper must be rolled back all the way to the first slice of bread so that when the bread is removed it doesn't touch the plastic wrapper, because that part of the wrapper has been exposed to the air, and maybe flies, when it was sitting out. The slice of bread must be removed from the wrapper with a fork so that you don't touch it with your fingers because no matter how many times you wash your hands they are never clean enough to eat with. Then you drop the slice of bread from the fork into the toaster. When the bread pops up, you have to remove it with the fork and then deposit it on a clean paper napkin which has been carefully opened up so that the toast does not touch the outside of the paper napkin, because that has also been exposed to the air and flies while lying out. Then you fold a corner of the napkin over to hold the toast in place while you butter it with a knife. You may now eat the toast while holding on to it with the napkin.

It's a long and detailed speech, I know. And not the only one I know by heart. There were just as long speeches about brushing our teeth and drying off with bath towels and washing the lettuce, *ad infinitum, ad nauseam.*

Ritualized cleanliness. What else? There was incest, of course. It started with the nude pictures when I was six, led to fondling my brand-new breasts when I was eleven, butt-patting (his hands 'slipped' ever farther to the fore with each passing year), and only stopped in my late teens when I delivered a hard blow to his testicles for grabbing my breasts for the two thousandth and last time. And the dirty talk; the Playboy and Penthouse magazines he showed us; the threat he made to have intercourse with me if I ever lost my virginity; the way he talked to my sister and me through the little bathroom window when we were going to the toilet; the time he threw open the shower door and whistled at me like a construction worker; making my sister get into bed with him with her bikini on so he could kiss her breasts and rub his erect penis against her; or the time he made the entire family go into the bathroom so he could measure our pubic hair. He also passed a law

that no family member except himself could lock the bathroom door for privacy. He insisted on complete control and lots of humiliation.

He was a violent man who mostly made an example out of Mom. She carried the black eyes, busted lips and broken nose as a testament to his power. (And the church demanded that she 'submit unto her husband even as the church submits unto Christ' and that the children 'honor their father.') He routinely pulled loaded guns and rifles on strangers and family members to get a point across. The only human being who ever stood up to my father (besides me) was my uncle, who told my dad he was less of a man than he thought he was as my dad pointed a loaded rifle at him. I thought that was pretty brave.

He had a thing about killing animals, too. When I was about three, our family was taking a drive through the woods. Dad stopped the car and Mom said, "Look at the cute little baby bunny!" As we were saying "ooh" and "aah," the adorable little bunny fell over and I smelled something burning. I turned to see smoke coming out of the end of my dad's revolver. He smiled and laughed. My mother choked back her tears. My sister and I sat there stunned. That is one of my earliest memories of dear ole dad.

What I learned about my dad, at the age of three, was that he liked to shoot baby animals for no reason at all. And killing them made him smile. I worried that he might kill baby me with the same ease.

My childhood is littered with dead or mistreated animals. When I was fifteen, I decided to impress my dad with my maturity, and offered three of my dogs and one cat to him as a 'sacrifice.' He put them in a burlap bag, threw them in a hole in the ground, then proceeded to empty a machine gun into the bag. I never shed a tear. I hoped my dad would finally accept me as an equal. I hoped to make him proud even though I was only a woman.

None of this has ever been easy to talk about. When I first discovered the word 'incest,' I was elated to have a word to describe what happened in our home, and I felt I 'belonged.' But after years of therapy, I still didn't know how to talk about dead animals, rituals of cleanliness, or enforced isolation. It seemed too terrible and extreme to discuss in a lot of incest meetings. I got tired of people approaching me after group to say the typical, "I can't believe what you lived through," and, "You seem so normal now." Gag. The last thing I need is to feel different and alone some more. In groups for ritual abuse survivors, I have found acceptance and a sense of belonging. I have also faced the threshold of my present ability to be aware of all of this. I can only digest it in bits and pieces.

The ritual abuse is far more frightening and overwhelming than the incest. Especially the years of forced isolation. It felt like eighteen years of prison. Day after day after year after year. On and on.

It's very frustrating telling people who aren't ritual abuse survivors about my childhood. They are either overwhelmed by it, or they don't believe my words and insist it couldn't have been that bad. "You must be exaggerating." People who knew me as a child know it was that bad, but talking to them is no comfort either, because they still treat me like damaged goods and go on and on about how terrible and strange it was, and how they never thought I would be 'normal.'

It's a hard and bitter truth; I spent the first eighteen years of my life doing hard time in prison. I'm just beginning to live, eight years into recovery. But I have a whole lifetime ahead of me, and I am grateful for my freedom today.

Our Wonderfully Civilized Western Culture

Jeremiah

I am a man in my mid-forties, a ritual abuse survivor who is still learning how to adjust and survive. As I share my story, I hope that you find strength and hope, as I have, in reading what others have gone through.

I am fortunate to have corroboration of many of my experiences. In the process of getting Department of Defense clearances for a certain job, I obtained access to otherwise unavailable hospital, school, and social service records.

Have you noticed how society buries its head in the sand, and denies that witchcraft, voodoo, satanism, and systems that abuse children exist right here in America—and in Britain, Germany, Russia, Canada—over the whole damned world? We ‘civilized’ ones get offended at voodoo practitioners who sacrifice chickens. We would never stoop to such primitive superstitious practices. *Oh no*, that sort of thing just doesn’t happen in our wonderfully civilized western culture.

Right.

My maternal grandfather was a practicing warlock. How non-threatening that looks when reduced to a single sentence.

He was also a child molester. My grandmother found this out after my mother was born and immediately divorced him. Unknown to her, he continued seeing—and molesting—my mother for years, laying the foundation for what was to come.

My sister was born when I was four, while my father, who was in the army, was assigned overseas. We did not go with him. Hospital records show I received extensive beatings from my mother during that time.

When I was four and a half, my mother caught me playing with matches. She took me into the kitchen, bound and gagged me, and held my right hand over the stove’s gas flame. I clearly remember the pain and seeing my hand blister, then char. Third-degree burns. I received no medical attention.

A few months later I started kindergarten. My hand had fused into a ball by this time, explained as a 'congenital defect' according to the school records. The teacher had us put on aprons and roll up our sleeves for finger painting. She noticed the deep blue streaks running up my right arm and took me to the school nurse. Blood poisoning.

I was airlifted to the hospital, my dad was contacted, and my mother was jailed. My dad obtained a discharge from the army. The divorce took a little over a year, and my dad received custody of my sister and me.

Six months later, my dad took me out early one morning so I could see where he worked as a sand-blaster in the oil fields. He was a pipe smoker, and never smoked while driving. Instead, he pulled off the road onto the shoulder and got out to enjoy his pipe.

It was very foggy that morning. Halfway out to the oil rigs my dad pulled over for a smoke. He was leaning on the front left side of the car (I was in the front passenger seat) when a drunk driver came out of the fog and hit the car head on. The drunk backed up and sped off into the fog.

I got out and ran to my dad. Blood was everywhere. His pelvis and chest were crushed, his chest was torn open, and I saw his heart beat twice and then stop. Something died in me at that moment; I was not able to cry. I cradled his head in my lap and just sat there. That is how the police found us.

The laws at that time were very different than they are now. My mother and her new husband obtained custody of my sister and me in spite of what she had done to us. This was the start of nearly four years of physical, sexual, and emotional abuse.

Hello torture, goodbye love.

This is very hard to write. The memories are far more intense than I realized, and I can see that my own deadly hatred of physical punishment and my deep fear and abhorrence of force derive from these events.

My stepfather, my mother, her father, and his mother were involved in a blend of Druidism and Wicca, both of which had roots in an even older earth-mother religion, according to my great-grandma's journals which I later inherited. Those journals contained accounts of rituals involving animal sacrifice and the drinking of blood. One ritual described was performed to cast a spell on my dad and cause his death so that my mother could get my sister and me back for use in their rituals. That ceremony, according to the journal, took place one week before my dad died.

Their celebration on receiving the news of his death was also recorded in detail.

How did it begin?

At first, it was simple: baths with both parents, fondling, touching, all justified by calling it love. Then my stepdad decided to teach my sister and me about the birds and the bees. He and my mother demonstrated it to us first. Then they forced us to participate. My sister and I were forced to mate with each other. Our parents made sure we experienced the full sensual pleasure, to reinforce that what they were doing was just another expression of 'love.' They destroyed our resistance with hunger, beatings, and threats. They used food to reward us for our capitulation.

They knew that my sister and I loved each other deeply and used that love to control us. When I didn't submit, she got beaten, and vice versa. Our parents threatened to kill us if we said anything to anyone, and our stepfather cut us with his hunting knife on areas normally covered by clothes, to reinforce the threats. They also burned us with lit cigarettes in strategic areas. Years later, a doctor questioned the circular scars on my arms, back, legs, and testicles.

After about six months of this, they gradually brought in other adults, and animals too. They had a small farm in the back yard, with geese, sheep, goats, a dog. My sister and I were forced to mate with each animal. When I resisted, my stepfather beat me brutally enough to put me in the hospital; I had severe damage to my groin. To this day, I have problems with my bladder. They told the doctors I had climbed to the top of the oak in our back yard, and fallen, hitting at least one limb. I backed them up because they threatened to kill my sister unless I lied.

Then the ritual abuse began.

Their worship involved using children as a symbol of seed and rebirth, seed that must be fertilized and opened to bring forth new life. Incest. Ritual rape during equinoxes, solstices, and the 'high holy days' (Candlemas, Beltane, Lammas, and Samhain). During transitional cusps. Ritual rape by thirteen adults in one evening at midnight.

I clearly remember being dressed in a white robe with nothing on underneath, standing by a small altar. My grandfather anointed me with a mixture of heather and lamb's oil, then removed the robe. My great-grandmother punctured a vein, drained my blood into a yew bowl, and used it to anoint me on the forehead, chin, heart, genitals, and feet. Then she went over to another small altar and did the same to my sister.

I was forced to kneel before the main altar where my mother lay, naked. My grandfather pointed to her and intoned, "Behold the symbol of the earth mother," and then, pointing to me and my sister, "Behold her children. From the earth proceeds the fruit." He chanted, "Her fruit is freely given to nourish us all." He picked me up, laid me between my mother's legs, anointed me with human blood to signify the blood and pain of birth, and then repeated the process with my sister.

He laid me on one of the small altars and my sister on the other, and each member of the group (excluding my grandfather and mother) raped us. When they finished, he said, "When the fruit has given of its sustenance, to the earth it returns." He picked me up, placed me between my mother's legs again, and forced me to have intercourse. The same thing was done to my sister.

The high holy days involved not only ritualistic rape of my sister and me, but also animal sacrifice. Cats, goats, and geese were killed (cats always on All Hallows' Eve). Letters between my grandfather and great-grandmother also discussed human child sacrifice.

My grandmother's journals described how the ceremonies enabled them to gain power from the earth mother, to gain personal power, and to use that power to control others. Sex was the ultimate psychic trigger to access and control that power.

So did we tell? Sure. Did it go all well and fine? No. We told my dad's mother and father. Grandma, who was full-blooded Choctaw, muttered under her breath about manitous, making hand signs to ward away evil. Grandpa, good old hard-core southern Baptist devout grandpa, overheard grandma. He made hand signs too, of the cross. He slapped grandma, told her to abhor her witchcraft, her Indian magic. He ranted at her that God says witches must die, that magic is evil and of the devil. They both growled and muttered about their movie-going, card-playing, square-dancing neighbors, who were all going to hell because they were sinning and filling my mind with evil thoughts.

I got grandpa's belt across my backside for telling lies and listening to the devil when I told him about mom and stepdad and great-grandma and the other grandpa. I felt his hands and the church elders' hands, rough, hard, painful, when they tried to exorcise the demons from me.

I learned then to be completely silent, to repress every emotion, every feeling, every facial expression, to endure extreme pain without crying out. I learned to watch people closely, to pay attention to every minute detail, every nuance, every action, every

word said. I became expert at extrapolating potential threats to myself and my sister and at taking action to avoid danger. Total silence. Total verbal, mental, emotional, physical silence. And my mind going intensely, white hot, gathering facts, observing, watching, analyzing.

One day, after nearly three years of this, when my sister and I were playing in the front yard, a social worker pulled up. He was going to the neighbors' house, but happened to look over at me. He asked me "How did you get those bruises?" *I told him.* I told him everything my parents did, the beatings, sexual abuse, all of it. I figured that my stepfather would kill me, but by then I was willing to die just to get at him.

I pulled off my shirt and dropped my britches to show the social worker. My sister (six years old then) freaked, and cried over and over again, "He fell down, he fell down!"

Lucky for us, my parents were in the back bedroom fooling around with a friend. The social worker told us to stay in the front yard and ran straight to the neighbor's house. He came back a few minutes later and told us to stay with him. Not long after that, four police cars and a paddy wagon appeared. The social worker showed the cops the marks on my sister and me. The cops pulled their guns and went into the house. I heard shouting and screaming and then they all came out. My parents and their friend were in hand-cuffs. Some of the cops were crying.

That night, my sister and I were in a foster home, and my parents were in jail.

A few months later, my maternal grandmother and step-grandfather (a trucker) got custody of us. He was just another unknown male threat to me until three months later.

I had stolen some money and spent it on a toy. My step-grandfather figured out how I got the money, took me to my bedroom, took off his belt, and told me to drop my britches and bend over the bed. Since I had been well trained to comply with adults, I did exactly as he said. By this time, I could take beatings without one sound, one tear. I somehow stepped aside inside my mind into an observation room.

I felt three firm, stinging whacks, nowhere near as violent and brutal as I was accustomed to. Then, nothing. After about thirty seconds, I chanced a look at him. He was putting the belt back on. In absolute bewilderment and wonder, I asked him, "Is that all?" He must have picked up the tone of my voice, because he asked me what I meant. So I told him about the punishments I was accustomed to.

I'll never forget the look on his face. Do you have any idea what it was like for me to see this immense two hundred and fifty pound muscular truck driver sit down on the bed and start sobbing?

He reached over, wrapped his arms around me, still sobbing. He explained to me that what had happened was not my fault, that it was abuse, that what I experienced from my mother and stepfather was not love. It was a very intense afternoon that left me in a tail-spin and turned my world completely inside out.

That day, my heart and soul were his. I know he laid the foundation for my recovery.

Yesterday's Nightmares

Sherry

I was born twenty-four years ago in New England. My mom and dad cared for me when I was a baby, and life was simple. When I got older and went to school, there were some rough spots in my life. In grade school and junior high, kids hit me and laughed at me because I was overweight. This brought my grades down and made me lose interest in school. Desperate to free myself from the abuse of the other school kids, I quit school at fifteen.

My father drank too much and hit Mom and me. We were poor because Dad used the household money to drink. We moved a lot. As time went by, I came to believe that my father didn't love me any more. There were fights and arguments just about every day that Dad drank. Once Dad hurt Mom real bad; the police were called, and Mom threw Dad out. When he came back, he never drank again, and he stopped hitting us.

When I was fourteen, my Mom's mother died. She was the greatest grandmother to me, and this was my real first experience with death, except for my cat, Midnight. After her body was placed in the ground, I felt so sad and depressed. A piece of my heart had been ripped away without warning.

I needed to escape the pain, so I began taking speed. As soon as I took that first pill, my life became a horror. I took other kinds of pills. I smoked pot, and took Valium to feel happy and carefree. Soon it was hard to get happy just on pills, and I felt I needed something more. I was glad when I was asked to a cocaine party.

Everything seemed so perfect on cocaine; I felt no sadness or depression. Soon my habit grew bigger, and I had no way of paying for it. I was told that if I delivered drugs my habit would be taken care of in exchange. So I did. Soon after, I had to steal from stores, cash bad checks, and deliver money to keep getting cocaine for free.

One day my mother found pot in my dresser drawer and made me go to counseling to get off the drugs and drinking. When I told the drug dealer that I wouldn't do the drugs any more, he became

very angry. Even though I was afraid, I turned away from him and never went back to drugs. I became born again as a Christian. My life was happy without drugs, and different.

Four years later, we moved into the projects where the dealer lived. The projects were bad. Our car was wrecked, our house was robbed, and we saw a lot of violence. One day, I saw this man from my past, and he asked me to deliver drugs for him again. I said no; I was off drugs. He told me that I owed him a lot of money for all the drugs that he had given to me for free. I told him that I had delivered drugs and money as a way of payment. He still argued that I owed him money, a lot of money.

He had changed over four years. He seemed stronger and heavier and looked like he lifted weights. I could see the anger in his blood-shot eyes. The sweat on his black skin also frightened me. He told me that if I wouldn't deliver drugs, he would punish me until I did. To punish me, he slashed my left arm with a straight razor so bad I had to have ten stitches. He promised that he would come back and keep hurting me until I delivered drugs.

He said he never would get caught. He claimed that his friends would say that he was with them when the police asked questions. He met up with me again about ten days later, and asked if I would do the deliveries. I tried to get away, but he was much stronger than I was. He cut me up real bad with that straight razor, and this time, I had to get fifty stitches.

Months passed. He hurt me just about every month, sometimes more often. I felt depressed and feared for my life. I prayed to Jesus to make this man stop hurting me and cutting me. The police never helped me. They took his side and said I was crazy. I spoke to so many people to try and get this man to leave me alone, but nobody believed me, and everybody seemed scared of him. He wore gloves every time he cut me and he threw the razor blades on the ground. Soon the police said I was cutting myself, but I was not. I became afraid to even go outside.

This man belonged to a cult, and he and his friends forced me to go with him. They met in a boarded-up old church. They sacrificed people and cats and dogs and other animals in a circle, both inside and outside the church.

Eight or ten men would jump me on the street, force me into a car, and take me to the cult circle. They blind-folded me so that I would not know where they met. They drugged me, taped my mouth shut with duct tape, and bound my feet with rope, my hands tied behind my back.

They put me in the circle and took turns cutting my body up. They inserted straws into my wounds to suck the blood out. I saw cats, goats, rats, foxes, and some animals that I had never seen before nailed to wooden boards, adored in worship to satan, and then flayed to death. One night, I saw a small child tied to a tree, blind-folded. They cut his penis off with a sword. I saw women of all colors raped, cut, and beaten. One woman fought them to her death. They raped her corpse and then cut her up and mutilated her body and put it into a green trash bag.

I was kidnapped at gun point from my apartment. I was starved, brainwashed, forced to take pills that made it hard to breathe, and forced to watch black men eat rats. I was gang-raped. My virginity was stolen, and I was left with a body that was violated and scarred forever. My eyes were sewn closed in the cult, and I was buried alive. I was tied to a tree and then nailed there because I wouldn't say I worshipped satan. And I was beaten with Bibles, because I believed in Jesus Christ.

Whenever the police questioned him or the other cult members, they said they didn't know me. He got away with the abuse by making it look like I was hurting myself. He told me that the leader had power over me, over the law, and even over Jesus.

He said that he was even more powerful than satan. He put me in a tree with a rope around my neck and let me hang there until I was blue and then asked me how death was. And he laughed. I will always remember his laugh. When he cut me he put razor blades in my mouth and then taped my mouth with duct tape so I wouldn't scream. He is a crazy man, totally nuts, and all those men that abused me with him are just plain crazy, too.

I decided to kill myself before they killed me. I hurt deep down in my soul and nobody would help me or believe me. Even though I begged God, I didn't get any answers. I started to drink and take prescribed medication while I listened to a song about suicide. I cried and cried. I suffered flashbacks as I took more and more pills with sips of whiskey.

I made it through that night. By morning, I had lost my sight. I felt like I was going to die, I was so sick to my stomach. I begged Jesus to stop the pain in my stomach, and I developed a will to live, no matter how bad things were. I asked God to forgive me for trying to end my life. I went to the hospital and learned my heart was damaged from the pills, but after an overnight stay, I was somewhat better.

That was the only time I tried to die. After that happened, suddenly that evil and crazy man completely stopped bothering me. Perhaps he was frightened by the police, who kept questioning and requestioning him. Perhaps he was afraid that he would go too far one day in torturing me and find himself facing a murder charge. Whatever the reason, (and I will probably never know), I believe that it is a miracle of God's mercy that I am safe now.

Once in a while I still experience flashbacks, have bad nightmares, and feel very dirty. Sometimes I am afraid to sleep at night because they might be there in my dreams to hurt me again. I hate the smell of soil because it gives me flashbacks. I fear all men, even the nice ones, because men raped and abused me. Memories and flashbacks are always traumatic because you feel like you are being abused all over the land.

I know that Jesus Christ is in my life and I have faith in Him. I am free from abuse because Jesus Christ set me free. I think someday I will be free of flashbacks, but I do not worry too much about it. I only ask Jesus Christ to let His will for my life happen today.

I attended a support group and I learned ways from the group to deal with these flashbacks. Support groups are helpful because everybody has been abused and can believe and understand each other. I attend therapy once a month to make sure that I am okay. My family has stuck by me through the years that I was abused. I study the Bible and pray to understand Jesus Christ's will for my life each day. I also pray that teens who are stressed or depressed don't make the same mistake I did, taking drugs.

I write poems, books, and short stories, and I am trying real hard to get my work published. When I see my scars and start to feel ugly, I look to Jesus Christ and count my blessings and thank Him that I am alive. Today I can say with tears in my eyes that I am a survivor and not a victim of ritual sexual, physical, and emotional abuse.

Sparkle, Girl, Sparkle

Heather

I am an alter in a system of over a hundred called The Clan. I want to tell my story because I think a lot of survivors will relate to it.

The grandfather was the 'master' of a satanic cult. The mother was involved and brought us into it after the father died, when the body was one year old. We were trained from two until almost seven to become the leader one day.

There was a lot of torture and terror. Babies were killed and adults had sex with each other, with children, and even with animals. The 'high holidays' saw a large gathering of members, but only twelve of the most elite members were present for the torture.

We were buried alive, put in a pit with rotting parts of babies and animals. We were hung upside down over a fire, drugged, and shocked. If we didn't memorize the rituals and perform them correctly, we were threatened with death. It was supposed to make us strong and give us the power of satan.

The mother did not want us to be involved with the cult, but she was forced to bring us there and participate in our abuse. During one of her suicide attempts she tried to overdose us to keep us from becoming satan's Bride. She hoped that we would die during one of the torture sessions so that we would not have to go through it any more. She finally married a man who took us to live in a city miles away from the grandfather and his cult, but both the step-father and the mother continued to sexually abuse us. We entered another cult in the new city by the time we were twelve because we had been programmed to return to cult life.

But that's not my story. I, Heather, was created for prostitution and pornography when the body was three years old. My first memory is of a big, old, fat man giving the grandfather a lot of money while he was stroking the front of my body. He took us off

in his car and drove for a long time, making me sit next to him and 'rub his lap' while he rubbed mine.

He brought me to an old beat-up building. There were a lot of stairs, and he kept climbing higher and higher. I had to walk in front so he could rub and pat my bottom. All I could hear in my head was the grandfather's voice saying, "Sparkle, girl, sparkle!" I was to act happy and cheerful and pretend I liked what was happening. I did smile and laugh, but I was terribly scared. I didn't know this man, and I didn't know what he was going to do.

He unlocked a door and pushed me in. There was one big room with a sofa bed, which was dirty and smelled bad. He sat down on the bed and told me to take off my clothes and dance for him. Twinkletoes came out and danced for a little while, but then I was there again. My dress, panties, and my shoes and socks were crumpled up in a pile. I didn't know how to dance, so I stood there and smiled. He picked me up and tossed me on the bed.

He came over and started to touch me, stroking my body all over. It felt a little good at first, but then he put his mouth on me. He kissed and licked me while trying to put his fingers inside of me, both front and back. It hurt and I cried quietly while still smiling and 'sparkling.' He put his fingers inside of me and poked around. It hurt so bad! He had a mean look on his face and said that I had to kiss and lick him too. So I did. He was too big for my little mouth, and he hit me hard for not doing it right. Then he got on top of me and put himself inside me. It hurt so bad that I cried out, so he took a dirty handkerchief and tied my mouth shut.

I think I fainted, but probably somebody else came out and took over. When I came to, I was all sticky between my legs, so I asked if I could go to the bathroom. It was dirty and smelled, with stains all around the floor by the toilet. I sat on the toilet and wiped myself. There was blood all over the tissue. I didn't know what to do. I kept bleeding, and I was afraid that he might punish me for making a mess. He finally barged into the bathroom with my clothes and told me to dress fast, he had to get me back.

All the grandfather said was that I was going to make a lot of money. Just look at all the money he got this time. So at least once a week he sold me. Once it was to a whole group of men who passed me around, over and over, while one of them took pictures. The worst time was when the body was five and I was sold to a man who had two big dogs. He made the dogs hurt me while he took pictures and made a movie. All I did was 'sparkle' just like I was supposed to.

When the body was seventeen, we left home to live on our own. There was no money, and nobody could really work, so I got a job at a Go-Go bar. Sometimes the boss told me to dance for one certain client. I knew that meant I would have to have sex with him. At least I got the money, some of it anyway, instead of somebody else taking it all.

I became a call girl when the body was twenty. It was the only thing we thought we were able to do. I earned a lot of money but used it all on cocaine to numb the pain of selling myself. I had been taught well that the body was only something to be hurt and abused, and if I could make money off of the pain, well, great. It was better than getting nothing but the hurt.

Now I am so much better. We have been in therapy for over four years and have much more self-esteem than we ever did before. I will never sell our body again. We are worth more than that. We have happiness now and we are glad that those bad people couldn't steal that from us.

A message from all of The Clan

We would like to see more survivors speak out, but realize that it could be very unsafe for them. We live across the country from where the abuse occurred and have changed our name several times. We do not fear the old cult coming for us, and, as a good friend said, "God help anyone who kidnaps you. They'll need help when you are done with them." But survivors who are still in danger can safely write letters to political figures. We need to call attention to ritual abuse and speak up just as loudly as the False Memory Syndrome Foundation.

It really does get better. I know that many who are reading this feel hopeless because it has been bad for so long. But it *really* does get better. There is happiness just waiting to be grabbed and embraced. If you are in a toxic or abusive situation, get out *now*. If you feel your therapy is going nowhere and all it is giving you is pain, renegotiate with your therapist to help you learn how to have fun and experience joy. If you can't do that, then it might be time for a new therapist. I bless mine for teaching all of us how to play and just be silly sometimes.

To close, we would like to share an affirmation that we repeat daily. It is a line from a Tori Amos song, and it says, "I'm okay when everything is not okay." It's true. Even though we have hardly any money, even though our daughter is in a foster home, even though not a session goes by without another horrible memory. Even though everything is not okay, we are. And you will be, too.

Free to Love at Last

Lee

A few years ago I was given a glimpse of the lack of control that I had over my life. It was one of those special moments that I know are given to me for a reason. I was married with two children, and yet deep down inside I knew there was something dreadfully wrong with me. I couldn't feel love. This desperate realization gave me the courage and strength to reach out for help.

I went to a treatment center and began to deal with my alcoholism and drug abuse. Once the fog began to lift, I was able to distinguish between the reality of my situation and the fantasy that I was so good at creating. My marriage ended because it was not loving, as I so wanted to believe, but abusive. I took my children to a shelter for battered women. There I was given an opportunity to determine the difference between truth and lies. I attended a program for women who had been abused, and my memories of incest began to emerge. I joined an incest survivors' group, but I knew that this was 'too easy' for me, and that there was still more, that I was missing something.

Then one day a girlfriend called and told me a story about a woman in the United States who had escaped from a cult. My friend said that the worst part of this woman's story was that she had been forced to leave her children behind and that they had been buried alive. These were trigger words for my own repressed memories. I screamed and felt the terror that I had not allowed to surface until that day. At the same time, I kept thinking. "How could I possibly know what it feels like to be buried alive? What is wrong with me?" For the first time I acknowledged a silent belief I held about myself: I was truly crazy.

The memories came in a flood. I had images of cats being hurled against the windows and snakes trying to slither into my home under the doors. I wrote everything down in my journal and sought counseling again. I was lucky and found a wonderful

therapist, a well-known Canadian expert on cult abuse. I am very, very grateful to him, as well as to my supportive friends.

My cult memories include immediate family members, relatives, and a high priest who was not a relative. Other family abuse included being forced to star in pornographic films that were then distributed to relatives. During my early teens, I was lent out to relatives as sexual entertainment for their rich friends.

The satanic rituals and ceremonies were held in a church, in the woods, and in a cemetery. I was often the altar, and women would prepare me for the rituals by smearing an ointment made from animal parts all over my body, into every opening. Cats were mutilated, and I was forced to drink a mixture of their blood and pieces of their dismembered limbs.

When rituals were outside, I was hung from trees or on an upside-down cross over a fire. There were people in robes, shouting and chanting. Their crazy laughter still haunts me today. I can see myself spinning around in a white nightgown, very drugged. Markings were made on the bottoms of my feet, my stomach and buttocks. They were not deep enough to leave physical scars, but they went very deep emotionally. I also remember burial in the ground, being put in a coffin with a dead body, snakes in my mouth and vagina, the torture chamber, and my teeth being drilled down to a nerve.

A lot of talk about satanism is about baby killings. I did believe that they used babies, and that I had actually killed them, too, during rituals. However, when reliving one such memory, it became clear to me that the baby was actually a rubber doll smeared with ketchup. The power of the message was the same, but it was based on lies and trickery.

I feel it is very important to distinguish between the truth and trickery. Once I was able to see that their power was based on lies and deception, it became easier to break free from them. Slowly, I began taking back my own life.

One of the more difficult tasks was to erase my fantasy and illusions surrounding my family. Despite their sickness, they were all I had ever known. I had a hard time giving up the hope that I was wrong and that they had never hurt me or tricked me. It was easier to believe I was crazy and making it all up than to deal with the reality of my situation and the pain of healing. Of course, part of the difficulty in erasing the fantasy family image is derived from the covers they created for themselves. My parents were prominent and prestigious members of society. Who would believe me? They even sang in the church choir!

When I confronted my family about the incest, I was met with all sorts of denial from all of them. As a result, I broke off all contact, and today I have no communication with my parents, siblings, or extended family members. This makes it easier to deal with my healing, without their denial or attempts at callbacks.

There is a strong possibility that both of my children are ritual abuse survivors. At the very least, they are incest survivors, since my father molested them when they were very young. At first, I felt tremendous guilt that I had not kept them safe, had not remembered my own abuse early enough to prevent them from being harmed. Today I choose to focus on what I am doing right, rather than what I didn't do, or did wrong.

My youngest daughter was the first to disclose. One day, when she was four, she told me that when she was two, my father touched her private parts. I told her all the things I had needed to hear as a child: it wasn't your fault; I'm sorry that happened to you; you are very brave. I then helped her write a letter to him, which I keep in a safe deposit box. I will show it to her when she is older, to confirm how brave and strong she is.

She used to hide behind furniture, and she had frequent vaginal rashes. She was very fearful during the day, and had nightmares of bogey men in church and of fire. For many years she slept with me, with the lights on. Today, this same child is filled with self-confidence and self-esteem. She sings, she has friends, and she tells me she's happy when she says her prayers at night.

My older daughter once got very upset on seeing a preview of a TV movie showing a child's body discovered in a grave in the woods. She turned off the TV, screaming and swearing, and kept pleading, "Tell me nobody is going to kill you, Mom." I cuddled her until she fell asleep, then took her to a counselor the next day.

She was only able to tell the counselor that her grandfather had taken her to a graveyard. I wish she could have gotten it all out, but the counselor said that perhaps it wasn't her time yet, and that I need to accept her right to recover in her own way and at her own pace. Today, she shows a love for animals and plants, which tells me she has a spiritual foundation. She does have behavioral problems at school, which are being addressed by myself, her teacher, and a specialist. Denial of her problems would only hurt her, and she deserves all the help she can get.

It is not easy to watch my children go through their pain, nightmares, behavior problems, and fears. I do know that, by continuing with my own healing, I am doing the very best I can for them. I free myself up to be a loving mother, and I let the therapists

perform the counseling. I believe that if I let go of my desire to 'cure' them, they are more open to the natural course and guidance that God offers.

Healing from my past is of primary importance to me. I refuse to let the cult destroy any more of my life. I allow the memories to come, deal with them, and then return as quickly as I can to the peace, contentment, and joy I feel in life now. When a memory surfaces, I know I need to face that terror and pain again, and that I will emerge a much stronger and freer woman.

Reclaiming my life has been an incredible gift. I am in the early stages of recovery, and yet already feel the excitement of a life of discovery and love. I no longer wish to die, or to sit on the side-lines of life, nor do I wish to inflict pain on myself in any way. I still abstain from alcohol and drugs and work on my eating disorder. (I used to be bulimic and anorexic.)

I do not do any of this alone. There are very special people in my life from whom I draw strength and courage. Without their unquestioning belief and unconditional love, I would not be where I am today. And my children are my motivators and teachers. When I get impatient and want to give up, I remind myself of what I want for my children and of how much pleasure I get from watching God give them exactly what they need to grow.

Today I have found a life with God, who fills the void and gives me the love I was so desperately searching for. From this foundation of courage and strength, I have begun to speak out about ritual abuse and violence against women.

It seems to me that whenever the topic of satanism is addressed, there is a morbid fascination with the gory details. While I can understand natural curiosity, I am concerned that I am being seen as an issue, rather than as an individual. I am careful to keep the focus off the effects, and put attention on the cause.

I believe that it takes a lifetime to heal from ritual abuse. To minimize the pain of one's experiences is to revictimize oneself. Satanism is oppression, power, and control. It is the defense of the indefensible, just as the oppressor intended it to be. The False Memory Syndrome Foundation is a good example of an organization that revictimizes survivors. The very attempt to force victims to defend their abuse is ludicrous and crazy-making. I refuse to be part of that debate.

The more I come to know myself, the more I have to give to my community. Today I work with other survivors, and have started to do my part in fighting the denial that exists in society regarding

ritual abuse. There is still so much needed, yet I believe the gains are there.

Finally, knowing that I am not alone, that there are other ritual abuse survivors, is a mixed blessing. I am sorry for their pain, and yet comforted by their presence. To all ritual abuse survivors, I would like to say, "Thank you. I am glad you are alive."

Reflections of Despair

Kire, a survivor from Sweden

None of the memories described here (nor any other significant memory) was recovered during any kind of therapy. I was born in 1954, twenty-five years before *Michelle Remembers* was published, long before satanism was talked about. Some memories have always been there. Some of them I remembered later; many in 1984, before I had heard anything about ritual abuse. I am now glad that I wrote them down in my diary that year. All the memories here described are very distinct and clear. I have other, more detailed, but also more dreamlike, memories which I have not included.

I only remember fragments of my life before I was six. They are fragments filled with terror. I was sitting in a car with my parents and my brother and sister. All I felt was horror. We were at a restaurant. I was eating cornflakes, but all I felt was fear. Why?

I never understood why a demon possessed me almost every night. There was nothing I could do to escape it. I remember that one day I realized that the demon was my father. I thought, "Why can't he die soon?"

I was lying on a floor. My father was standing above me, and suddenly I was paralyzed by painful convulsions. It was an agony that is impossible to describe. I didn't know what caused this overwhelming agony. Later I learned that it is called electricity.

At the age of six, something in my life changed. The terror was not as intense, and I can remember more. I remember nightmares about hell, the devil, witches, snakes, underground tunnels, evil spirits. What can make a child dream about such things? I remember dreaming that there was a 'death line' on my penis. I woke up in fear. Why does a seven or eight year old boy dream such a thing? I remember building a temple on the floor with Lego toys when I was eight. In my fantasy play, I walked to the 'sacred room' in the temple. I got an erection. What can lead a child to play such games?

When I was eight or nine years old I dreamed that I was lying on a bunk. Around me there were demons who wished to possess me in a sexual way. How can those who don't believe in ritual abuse explain such a dream?

Was I perhaps raised in a Christian fundamentalist family where hell and the devil were a part of the daily conversation? I was not. My family was conventional, rather boring. In daylight.

In my parents' living-room there was one, and only one, object with any religious meaning. It was a sculpture of the god Pan. I was afraid of it. I didn't understand why until much later, when I realized that Pan was the God of 'sex magick' in the occult underworld. Now I understand better why I was afraid even of Peter Pan, who came in the night and took the children to strange places.

This is my most distinct memory from the time before I was six. I was three years old and in a hospital being treated for appendicitis. I finally realized that there were nice and warm adults who seemed to care for children. I believed that they could help me. I told them that I wanted to stay in the hospital forever and that I never wanted to go back home. But their answer was, "It can't be that bad, of course you want to go home." Then my parents came to get me. The torture began again.

When I was eight, I began to read the Bible. I read nearly everything except the Book of Revelation, because I was so afraid of that particular part. But the Bible is a frightening book. I understood perfectly well that the children of Israel must do something to fight the people who were sacrificing their children to Baal and Molech. But why must they destroy everyone, including the children? Wouldn't it be better if they saved the children from the adults?

But I liked when Jesus said, "Or what man is there of you, whom if his son asks bread, will he give him a stone? Or if he asks a fish, will he give him a serpent?" I remember thinking that Jesus was an unusually good person because He didn't think that children should get snakes or stones when they asked for food.

Children should have many rights that they don't have today. Above all they should have the right not to grow up in a concentration camp. Adults should have the obligation to listen to children, to be sensitive to every signal from children. And society should have the obligation to act to protect children from harm.

It is easy to deny and explain away unpleasant things. You can always think about the story about the boy who cried, "Wolf!"

although there was no wolf. Then you can go to sleep and forget the end of the story: one day the wolf came.

To shut one's eyes is an elegant solution. To explain away the reality as mass hysteria or as a social construction is even more elegant. But those who today don't want to use their eyes to see with will have to use them even more tomorrow to cry with.

Those who continue to shut their eyes, to talk about 'hysteria,' to dismiss survivors as liars or easily manipulated fools, are responsible for the continuing terror. They should know better. They are co-responsible for a suffering that never, ever can be fathomed. And somewhere they will never be forgiven.

The Telling

Isabel Storm

I'm going to tell you this the way I told my lover: in bits and pieces. Just a little at a time, here and there, hints at first, to warm you up. When I feel ready, as I begin to trust you, maybe I will say more. The picture will start to come together. After a while, you'll begin to recognize fragments, people, places, ideas, and you'll be able to say: "Oh, yes, that was the pornography." Or: "The incest." Or: "The ones who worshipped satan." Or: "The drug dealers."

After a longer while, you'll begin to see a picture, a picture in your head, like the one in mine. Maybe you'll begin to cry. I say you might cry because it will be sad to you, a caring person, to see those beautiful hills, green in the spring, land of hope, the West, land of renewal and pilgrimage, of adventure and romance, distorted into a place of violence and pain.

You might see a child there, sprawled amidst the green grass, counting clouds. Then suddenly the happy scene will vanish, and you will see a cracked mirror, the child's face twisted by pain as she is raped and beaten. This may make you cry out in shock and horror, and at that point you will see the child open her mouth to scream, but no sound will come out. She cannot scream. You may have to scream for her.

As you scream, the hills will turn brown, the color of the land of the Reaper, of Death. It is All Hallows' Eve, and the child is being tortured. Physically and mentally tortured. They will not let her go; they will not let her stay in her body. She would like to die this fall, die like the withering grass, the leaves dropping off trees. She would like to die and travel to some far off place.

You see her, a speck of light amongst the other stars, dimly glowing in some distant galaxy. She is a laughing, dancing, twinkling speck, and you are happy for her. You hope that she is safe now.

But no, she is not safe. I will not let you off so easily; there is more to my story. The girl does not escape until the age of twenty-

two, when she remembers. When she is no longer a child, when there is no childhood left to save. When it is too late. There is a lot of ground to cover until then.

Some of it is in the South, the southern part of the Western states, where the days are long and golden, the sky a clear endless blue. You can relax in that sky; you can stretch out and feel your power and balance, feel what is right and good in the world. You may not want to think about child abuse.

But it is there, swarming beneath the surface of the city. "Lights! Camera! Action!" you hear the ghosts scream out, for they are only ghosts to you. But to the girl they are real, living presences, and they are hurting her, forcing her into sexual acts with men, other children, animals. As if this is not enough, they are filming her, capturing this moment of humiliation and pain on celluloid, forever, for men to look at, to lust after, to jerk off to. It is repulsive and you will probably want to vomit. Please do. Then I will know you are really listening, understanding what I am saying.

After the pornography, there is the electroshock, the LSD, the father and friends, the basement. The ways that they tried to shatter the girl, to make her multiple so that she would never tell what happened. She is telling now. You are listening.

When they went to kill her, she knew she had a choice: to try to live, or to try to die. She thought about it a long time in her child mind, trying to decide. Death was beckoning, tempting, a warm dark soothing place, the mother she never had. She could feel Death's arms sweep her up, rock her, croon her to sleep.

But she knew there was a reason. A reason to live, a reason to stay, to keep blowing into the embers of her own spark, her will to live, to bring herself back to life. To hold onto all the pieces in the hope that one day, someday, she would have the opportunity to put them back together again. To reconstruct herself, to heal herself, sexually, mentally, spiritually. To find God again in her own heart; to remember who she was, what she came here to do.

As she thought these thoughts on the eve of her decision to live or to die — the small girl with the big soul — time warped, and she became a woman of twenty-six, sitting at a small table in a big city on the East coast, writing. Telling her story, to you. And this is the beginning of the reason why.

This is the healing.

A Hunger to Heal

Susan W.

I am a thirty-nine year old woman who got sober in Alcoholics Anonymous a little over seven years ago. I decided to give AA one year, and if my pain didn't lessen, I would quit and drink again. I cried my way through my first year of sobriety. I didn't know what was wrong with me, but when I started hearing women speak about incest, I took my sponsor's wise suggestion and got into therapy. I was reacting to what I was hearing in a way that suggested I might have a similar history, even though I had no memories of my childhood.

My first therapist used a Gestalt approach, along with bodywork. I was afraid to let him touch me and I was afraid to touch myself. In one of the very first sessions he said "You are your body." I remember feeling disgust and saying to him, "How can you say that?" His reply was "How can you not?"

We very gradually began doing hands-on bodywork, after many months of preliminary work. Since we contracted around the work, I knew ahead of time what would be happening and I always had a choice about things. It was through this bodywork that I began remembering the abuse. I also began 'owning' my physical body, which today serves as the container for the selves, the inner people/ parts who actually hold my memories and history. I, Susan, am the person who got sober, earns a living, cleans the house, and pays the bills. I survived as a child by disowning my body and my feelings, by splitting off the experience of being abused, and by fragmenting myself.

I have worked with this therapist for more than six years now, and I have 'gotten back into my body' and realized that I was sexually abused by many perpetrators. A few years ago he mentioned the term ritual abuse and I said I didn't know what that was. Today I know the term all too well. It means pain upon more pain, which never ever seems to end.

I was raised as a fundamentalist Christian and attended church every Sunday. I have 'knowings' and numerous body memories that indicate that this particular branch of evangelical Christianity was *not* normal. I have a sense that there was a downstairs church as well as an upstairs church. I believe that some of the abuse took place in the basement of this church, as well as in my grandmother's basement and attic. I know the abuse was perpetrated solely by females, but the only ones I can identify are my mother and my grandmother.

I have often wondered how memory works for people. How do we hold, store, and retrieve memories from decades ago? I have read accounts where individuals give vivid descriptions of abuse and tell intimate details. After reading these accounts, I am sure that my abuse never really happened because I don't have the narrative so many people seem to have when they tell their stories. I don't retrieve lengthy memories all at once. Instead I get bits and pieces, fragments; and the bits and pieces are put together to make one photograph. Then I piece together another photograph, and then another, until I have enough photographs that when I hold them up and look at them one after the other, I have a memory.

One memory that I've been piecing together, while hoping it was only a metaphor, involves participating in killing of babies, and services involving eating and drinking the flesh and blood of the infants to become one with the group. I cannot say for sure if these child sacrifices actually occurred, if they were staged, or if they truly are metaphorical. I have not had complete memories of this, only bits and pieces, all of which hold tremendous emotional energy.

Other memories I've retrieved include being left in a basement, naked and completely covered with spiders, when I was around two. When I was four, I had to participate in my mother's abortion. That same year, I was told that it was my fault (because I was a girl) that my father sexually molested me. As punishment, I was tied up and left in my grandmother's basement, blindfolded, to repent of my sins.

I tend to discount my own remembering when I compare it to others. It's not the same as, it's not as bad as, I am different from, rather than seeing ways I am similar to others. That's a very old way I keep myself isolated like I was as a child when the abuse was going on. The difference is that when I was a child, being different from my mother and grandmother was life-giving, since they were

my perpetrators and were female just like me. Being different from them helped me to stay alive.

When I got sober, I knew that something was wrong with my childhood but I could never quite touch it. My mother had written in my baby book that as an infant I ate a wide variety of foods, but at the age of two I stopped eating all meats, vegetables, and fruits. I ate only a few select foods, always the same ones, always cooked in the same way. It was my only 'no' in my childhood, the only control I had in my life. It was a way I created consistency in an insane, unpredictable home. There was no way for me to say 'no' to the abuse, so I found a different way to have a 'no.'

I learned how to eat during my first year of sobriety. I remember the first tiny piece of orange I ever tasted. The flavor exploded in my mouth and the tears poured from my eyes. I tried zucchini and okra, blueberries and kiwi. I bought my first jar of mustard. I tried fish, carrot cake, stir fry, and pesto. I was tasting symphonies of flavors and textures and being nurtured in ways which I had deprived myself of for over thirty years. This was truly an awesome and moving time in my healing.

This past year in therapy I did some work around the ritual abuse ceremonies involving the killing and partaking of infants. After releasing some of the rage and pain that I carried, I was able to buy my very first kitchen table. I also got pots and pans and started to cook for myself, really cook and really nurture myself. Understanding and releasing the emotions around why I stopped eating made this possible.

I believe that I should have died many times over, and I did not. Why am I still alive, what is my purpose, why am I here, what is the point of this life on earth? I do not understand. I believe that those women told me that I was to grow up and be a healer for God the way they were. As long as I can remember, I never wanted to be anything when I got older. Only older. I know that I do not have to be a healer for God in the way the women in my family were, but I know that my soul's path is in healing work, and it begins by healing myself.

I began getting the memory pieces around the ritual abuse when I joined my first therapy group, a group for women who self-injure. The second group I attended became a particularly safe place for me, and I felt an immediate connection with one of the woman therapists who ran the group. I didn't know at the time that she had extensive knowledge and training in working with clients who were ritually abused, as well as training in early childhood development. When I learned this, I knew it was one of those coincidences that meant I was on the right path, even though I was

frightened. I thought, "Oh maybe I can heal this wound," and, "Oh maybe I'll need to look at this stuff."

I started individual therapy with this woman, and the work that I do in her presence is the most painful work I've ever done in my life. It is even harder than the initial bodywork I did to get back into my body. There is a lot of physical contact during our sessions. My therapist has said to me that she's very careful and thoughtful about the touching we do. There is conscious choice made on both our parts to allow this type of healing to happen. I know that a lot of therapists aren't comfortable with touch and have rigid boundaries around contact with their clients. Society in general discourages making physical contact with others. For me, my healing path has been one of touch and body contact done in a very careful, respecting manner. It was a relief to know my therapist was open to meeting my needs in the way I was comfortable and familiar with.

And so, my healing path has continued with a woman. In my sessions, I allow myself to be in the parts of myself who were wounded by my mother and my grandmother within the context of ritual abuse. I am learning that not all women kill, not all women hurt, not all women are crazy. I am beginning to believe the women in my family were insane, and I am coming to believe that I am not.

In every ounce of my flesh, I carry distrust of women, and distrust of myself, because I too am a woman. So it is through my body-self that I need to learn, through the cells which hold and carry memories of the abuse, through the cells which also are me.

I go back, week after week, and allow my inner wounded children to come out and be nurtured. I never went through any of the developmental stages that a normal child goes through, so I am doing some of that now. I hate doing the work, but I also know that it is my path out. The path to myself, to my core that I so hunger for.

I think if your core is intact, you probably don't realize what a precious gift you have. My core was missing, and I have had to unfreeze the younger parts of myself, allow them to thaw and come back to life. It has been through trying to put the pieces of myself back together again that I have deeply felt the loss and the damage done to my core self, while appreciating what a gift a whole core self must be.

My initial split happened when I was an infant, so I have had to begin to heal those babies. I know that all infants have the basic right to be, the right to exist. Ritual abuse robs you of that right. I learned how to *not be* in order to survive. In my healing today, I

need to allow myself to 'be' in those infants and get physically held. I need to learn within the very cells and muscles of my body that this woman, my therapist, can be trusted not to kill me. I need to learn to trust that if I allow myself to be in my infants, that I won't die simply because 'I am,' because 'I exist.'

Infants learn through touch, through their bodies, through their senses. In order to heal today, I have to go against the very thing that kept me alive as an infant and a small child. So today when I am taking risks in therapy, I fear for my very life. I believe that what I am doing will kill me, while it is the very thing that is giving me life, sustenance, and hope.

I know that I cannot get now what I never got as a child. That is lost to me forever. I continue to grieve that loss and to learn how to take in goodness through my body. I am physically learning how today can be different. I am learning that some women actually are caring and warm people. How can I be a kind, loving woman. Just what does that mean?

From the physical contact I get, I am learning how to hold myself, how to rock myself, how to soothe myself, how to mother myself when I am away from my therapist. I am learning that I am not the piece of trash that my mother told me I was, treated me like I was. I am learning that my body is like my therapist's body, while I also know it is like my mother's body. I am beginning to understand that I am not my therapist and also beginning to believe that I may not be my mother.

I have many girl parts inside me who I do not know very well yet. I think they are not at all like my perpetrators. I think maybe they are soft and shy and frightened. They were probably also badly wounded. I have allowed my first therapist to love the male parts of myself, and now I need to let my female therapist teach me how to love and accept the female parts of myself.

So it's been a lot, you know, and if you are reading this book, then you surely must know. I know we all have our healing path. Our very nature is, I believe, to heal. And I heal by going back to the past (while keeping one foot in the present), going through enough of the memory to know what happened, and then moving on by finding new ways to organize myself. Rather than reacting in the same old abused style, what can I do today that will help make things be different? How can I learn to trust? What is trust? I know I believe in the process of healing. I *need* to heal, for it has been my sole reason for living since I got sober.

I have a hunger to heal, to know, and to really feel love in my life today. I never felt love because I was so shut down from the

abuse and so splintered within myself. My heart's path is to heal my core and to own the love that is my birthright, which was stolen from me because of the ritual abuse. I cannot change my history, cannot rewrite it, much as I'd like to, but I can, and am, changing today.

On the Other Hand

Jane Solay

When you are born to satanist parents, you drink paradox with your mother's milk. It is the air you breathe, the background of life. We from the same village recognize each other by our ease with contradiction. Paesano, paesana. My people.

I take a strip of paper, fold it into a Mobius strip. "This is the dark side," as I draw a pen along it. Then I release my fingers and the paper spreads out on the floor. "So all is dark, there is no good? All has been corrupted?"

I pick up the paper and twist it back into shape. Take white-out and cover the ink, drop the mess onto her pretty carpet. "Oh yes, absolutely, and this too." "I understand," she says, her mouth pinched. Paesana mia would have been rocking with laughter way before this.

My Mobius strip is simply 4-D yin/yang.

And what, you ask, is
Borderline Personality
Disorder? I say it is
two-dimensional, the world
divided into two camps, good
guys and bad guys, who like to
switch places every so often,
for variety. Spice things up a
little. I smile inwardly. On a
good day, when I feel kindly, I
present myself as borderline to
those outside my village. I say
that satanism is bad,
non-satanism is good.

Those who believe satanism
actually exists nod sagely in
agreement. The others foam at
the mouth and say the most
entertaining things.

On a bad day, you ask? I
pretend to have outgrown
cruelty. It bores me. I don't
often care to make outsiders
feel inferior, simply because
they do not intuitively grasp
3-D, 4-D, 5-D morality. It's
too easy — cruelty is child's
play, no challenge. Mastered in
kindergarten. Of course it is
cruel to be so superior, so in
control. It is cruel to be
kind to those whose minds do
not yet stretch. Another
paradox.

Oh how I love to be among my
exiled compatriots. Sisters,
brothers, paesani. We speak the
same language, we laugh at the
same times. It eases my
homesickness.

Opposites in My Being

Caron Pearcy

How do I write about what happened? Who am I writing for? I'm writing for me, to tell my story. I just want to put it into some kind of order, to put it into words. I struggle with trust. Will I be safe telling my story? There are a lot of holes — some things I can't remember. Sometimes I was drugged and at times I did not know what was real and what was deception. I write this for you — for other survivors — that you may know you are not alone and you are not crazy.

These things I know. When my husband confronted my father with my abuse, my father said he never physically, emotionally, sexually, or religiously abused me. Why would he say 'religiously'? It is not a word that usually goes with abuse.

When I attend my highly liturgical church, I 'see' images of men dancing on the altar and urinating into the chalices. When I was five, I used to show off to the neighborhood kids by sticking nails up my butt. My sister was sticking nails up her butt at age two and a half. Two years ago another sister's leg was paralyzed from the waist down with no apparent reason. I learned in a workshop that ninety percent of this kind of thing is caused by early child sexual abuse.

Two of my sisters and I have each been raped twice. Most of our marriages are in trouble. All of us have been suicidal. All of my sisters and my parents deny anything ever happened. Sometimes I think I must be crazy, but these things I know, and cling to as the truth.

I was raped hitchhiking, once when I was eighteen and again at nineteen. I thought I had dealt with those rapes at the time they happened. A very good friend helped me decide to use that experience as a means to understanding others' suffering. A few years ago, my work brought me into contact with a man much like the rapist. I quietly freaked out. If life was going to make me repeat exposure to rape, I would quit. I got suicidal, I went to a therapist,

a man who asked me if being raped felt good. He also told me I needed to go white water rafting, downhill skiing, or have an affair to get over my depression.

He moved to California, and my depression continued to deepen for another year. I found a therapist who dealt with codependency and addiction issues, which wasn't really my need, but she was a woman and helped me face a tremendous sadness about life. After I worked with her for a year, she felt she was not making any progress, so she sent me to a psychologist with a background in sexual abuse.

I couldn't figure out why. As far as I knew, my family had been a pleasant, liberal, suburban, Presbyterian one with professional parents. Pretty ordinary. The psychologist asked me if I'd ever been alone with my dad. I remembered a trip to New York City. I remembered wanting to jump out a thirty-second-story window. And then I remembered him forcing me to have oral sex. I threw up, and both of us 'agreed' that it must have been the spaghetti supper that made me puke.

The other time I was alone with my dad was when my mother was in the hospital giving birth to my youngest sister. All the rest of my sisters went to friends and neighbors, but Dad kept me home with him. He showed me pornographic books and asked if I wanted to know how a man and a woman loved each other. He fucked me and I fainted. He showed me and him together in the mirror, and said I was a woman now. I knew I wasn't because I had no breasts. I was confused, I wanted to believe my dad, but I knew that I was not a woman at eight.

When I was thirteen, I was walking in the woods one day in late fall. The leaves were dry and crackly under my feet. I was going on a path toward a familiar cabin, but I was pushed from behind in the opposite direction. I was pushed and prodded until I came to a clearing with six men in black ministerial robes standing in front of tree stumps about eighteen inches high. One of them had a black book and recited a marriage ceremony. I was stripped and taken to a bed and oiled with a light rose-smelling oil. Two of the men raped me.

Later there was an initiation. My chest was cut, and I was urinated on and passed from one man to the next. I fell asleep and someone covered me with a blanket. In the morning I drank coffee and waited to be taken home.

One day in late December, I was given something that made me cramp very badly. A baby less than a month old was placed between my legs and I was told I had given birth to a son. I was

taken from a little room onto a stage where a lot of people were watching. They placed the baby on a table with a white cloth on it and gave me a knife. I refused to touch the baby. A man led me back into the smaller room and told me if I did not sacrifice the baby, they would be forced to kill my dad. I knew Mom would hate me if anything happened to my dad, so there was no choice. Dad took my hand in his and together we cut the chest of the baby open and took out the heart. They put the heart put on a silver platter and said some words. Then they gave me the heart to eat and everyone applauded.

In the eighth grade, I took Home Economics. I learned to cook and budget because I believed my dad and I would get a little garage apartment. I would make little cream cheese strawberries and wonder if my dad would like them when he got home from work.

About the same time I got pregnant. My mother asked if my period was late. I assured her that I was just irregular. My waist size caught up with the biggest girl in my class. I begged my mother to do something. I did not want to go through another 'birth' and sacrifice.

My family went on vacation to Alaska, via Canada, where abortions were legal. Dad took me to get tickets for a ferry boat ride, but the place he took me to was a clinic, with no travel posters on the walls. He told me I had to have a check-up. The doctor took me to a back room and aborted the baby. At the time I didn't know what he was doing. I didn't know if my dad knew what he was doing. I told Dad my period had started so we picked up some sanitary napkins and joined the rest of the family. The doctor had given me some pills for infection, and Dad told me not to let Mom see me taking them. I was so confused.

Later that summer, purification rites were held. They put snakes into my vagina and tied them around my neck. It was terrifying. Once they put the snake head into my mouth while they inserted sticks into my vagina. It hurt so bad I bit the snake's head. I can still feel the flesh and bones mashing between my teeth.

The next winter I underwent another 'birth.' This time they put a hood over my face; they called it the 'Motherhood.' I believe they put wax on the cloth which hardened into the shape of my face. They put a belt around my neck which they tightened and loosened to 'help' me push when the cramps got bad.

This time they gave me the baby to hold and caress, and I believed it would be mine to keep. Then they took it from me and impaled it on a sword, blood dripping onto my abdomen. They

called him a shish-kabob. Then they wrapped him in cloths like a mummy and hung him from a miniature gallows. I could see but not reach the baby, and I was crying because I wanted this baby so badly. This was my promised son, the one I could keep for my very own. I was convinced these 'births' were real — only later did I see the elaborate deception and trickery.

There was one more 'birth,' which involved a casket full of mangled dogs. Apparently I had been involved in their deaths, and the saying 'an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth' was acted out.

The group my parents were involved with was called 'Thanatos,' love of death. They kept experimenting with death — taking people to the edge and seeing how far they could go and still bring them back to life. At one point they put me into a cement crypt and drowned me. My father brought me back and said he wanted to teach me not to fear death, that now I could help other people die, because I could reassure them that death was not to be feared.

Another time they put me on top of a man in a coffin and told me to stroke his penis. Little by little he began to stir, until finally he rolled me under him and raped me. My dad praised me and praised me for bringing this man back to life. I was so torn; wanting to believe my dad and be proud of what I had done, but there was so much pain and hurt.

They set many things up so it seemed as if I were choosing them rather than being forced into impossible situations. Once Dad showed me a whole room full of children through a one-way mirror. He took out his rifle and asked me which one he should shoot. I totally froze, knowing if he didn't shoot one of them, I might be his target. I could not choose, and finally he put the case back on the gun and said it was a joke. Another time they put me in front of three doors and asked me to choose which one I wanted. One door involved sex — if you can call it that — with dogs, another meant a marriage ceremony, and the last door meant rapes by people dressed in various costumes, such as football uniforms.

Dressing up and play-acting seemed to be a popular part of the cult. Once they had a big ball with people dressed as confederate soldiers and ladies. Another time they set us up as homesteaders and a group of men dressed as Indians raided us, carrying off the women and children and raping them. Some of the people were laughing, as if they knew it was a game; others were squealing and crying. It was pure pandemonium.

My mother was part of all this. She was the Red Queen until I turned fourteen, then I took her place and she became the Black

Queen. At one point she and my dad sat on chairs made to look like thrones. They had a baby with them and asked me what to do with him. By then I was fully into the cruelty and barbarism and would have done anything I thought my dad wanted. I cannot believe the cruel and inhuman things we did to that baby. At the end he was dead and mutilated beyond belief. I took the baby and hugged and mothered it. My parents thought I was mocking it and making fun of it. *No, him. Not it.*

Even now I have to change my way of thinking and my vocabulary. They taught me to depersonalize everyone — everyone smaller than me. But I named all the babies I 'had' — Chronos, Temos, Angelos, Marten. I feared what my parents would do if they knew how much I really cared for the babies, so I hid it very well.

I got out when I was eighteen and left home. I lived in various communes around the country, totally on guard against people who claimed to be god, or to have special powers. I met Jim Jones and wanted nothing to do with his ilk.

I became very involved with the peace movement, attracted deeply to the idea of nonviolence and overcoming evil with good. I guess I thought I could try that with my parents. I went home for visits but never stayed very long. I got married and had three kids, and life seemed to get very normal for awhile.

When I was in my late thirties, I experienced a call back. My parents sent me a black watch with golden Roman numerals on it; the message being it was time to die. But before I did that, I was to return to my parents, get pregnant, and give my dad a male heir (he only had daughters), and it had to be done before I was forty. After the birth I was to be killed.

I didn't go back. My therapist insisted on my making 'no contact' contracts, and we became quicker and wiser at catching on to their tricks. For my birthday they sent me Tabu bath powder, and for Christmas a 'succulent, young turkey breast.' These things sounded so innocent, but they were messages to me. I finally cut off all contact with them and took their gifts to the new domestic violence shelter. It was appropriate. The hardest thing was realizing Mom was making doll houses, with all the furnishings, for my nieces and not for my daughter. But my sanity was more important than a doll house. And there was such relief at turning forty and in becoming too old for childbearing.

A lot of harm has been caused by the incest. At the church I attend, there are robes and candles, crosses and altars. For a long time I couldn't go. For another long time, I had to check the chalices carefully when the priest said "blood of Christ." I was so surprised

when it was only wine. I also cried at seeing children in white choir robes; they were so innocent, so free of evil, and I had never been innocent.

I don't know when the cult experiences started, but I expect it was from my birth. The smell of candles being snuffed out gave me flashbacks to other rituals, and baptisms were excruciating. The babies couldn't choose what was ahead of them, and I thought a baptism led automatically to torture and torment. I spent a lot of time hanging out in the columbarium at our church — the place where the ashes of cremated people are stored. And when I looked at the bronze bas relief of Jesus holding a lost lamb, I felt so lost.

Spiritually I have a hard time connecting with God. Maybe I never have. I tried, though, working through my church and in the peace movement. I tried to bring peace and love to others, but I saw God continually as just beyond reach.

As I discovered the ritualistic abuse, the relationship with God got worse. Love died. I quit caring about anything. I was convinced if God wanted me to love, he'd have to force me. I blamed him for allowing the abuse to happen, for creating Mom and Dad, for creating me, for not stopping it. I cussed him out regularly. Then I became convinced he didn't cause it, but he did allow free will. There was nobody to act as his agent to save me or protect me or comfort me. It was pretty bleak.

I did have a guardian angel and we'd fly out the window when it got bad. I gave my soul to God and now I want it back. I believe now that God watched. He didn't do anything to hurt or help, but he was there. I thought for a long time my dad was God's beloved son; Dad sure believed he was. I didn't want to go to heaven because I believed Dad would be there. Now I do believe he and my mother will face God's judgement.

The abuse has affected me emotionally and sexually as well. I dissociate at the slightest hint of anger or unpleasantness. I can't trust my feelings when I give support to, or receive compassion from, my friends. Part of me feels very gentle and kind towards them, while another part is lashing out at them mentally for being such wimps.

In the cult, I had to learn to mask and fake my feelings. I was so angry at my helplessness that I have really mixed emotions when I see others who are sad and hurting. I feel tremendous empathy for them: at the same time, I get furious with them for being helpless and weak. I was trained to be a victim, too. I think if a rapist approached me, I'd ask him where he wanted me to lie down. I was trained to put others' needs ahead of my own, and I

have a hard time establishing healthy boundaries. When is my kid simply asking for a drink of water, and when is she sucking the life blood out of me?

The worst effect of the abuse has been with my family; the one I chose. I completely closed them out, especially my husband. We went two years without sex. He put all his energy into keeping the kids and the household stuff going. I was gone physically some of the time. I was in the hospital for five weeks one year, and eight weeks the next. And then I lived with another friend for three months, fearing that I had or would abuse my children. Protective Services interviewed my kids, and couldn't find evidence of abuse.

I stayed remote from them emotionally as well, because I was so ashamed of what I had done, and it was really hard to be around normal kids. I had no love to give them and that was hell. My four-year-old daughter couldn't understand why I dropped her to the floor when she patted my face. I still don't understand why I am so remote. I can understand separating from my family of origin, but why the one I chose and created with my husband?

I separated completely from my birth family about five years ago. One sister called my flashbacks 'illusions.' I miss that family at times, but I feel so crazy around their denial. It's easier to have nothing to do with them. One sister acknowledges my pain, and says it must be coming from somewhere. Incest might have happened to me, but *her* daddy didn't do it. I confronted my parents by letter with the incest, but not the cult abuse.

When this False Memory Syndrome Foundation hit, I really had to examine myself. What if I was making it up? My therapist did not put ideas into my head; they were already there. My dad was the one who said he never 'religiously' abused me. The psychiatrist in the hospital said my thoughts were on one side of the fence, and my feelings on the other, and they never connected. He said only trauma splits a person that way. The only reaction I had to being raped at eighteen and at nineteen was a depression twenty years later. It tipped my therapist off that some trauma had occurred before.

People who know me believe me, and sometimes that helps me believe myself. My best friend and my husband believe me; my priest believes me. My husband didn't like dealing with it; he dealt with abused teens all day long, and was hard to have to deal with it at home, too. But he gave me hugs and listened and supported me.

I went through a pretty self-destructive time. I was cutting myself and taking lots and lots of aspirin and drinking whole

bottles of wine. I wanted to feel something, and I wanted to hurt. I wanted to pass out because 'it hurt.' I didn't know what 'it' was, but it hurt. I wanted to yank my steering wheel to go over into the paths of oncoming trucks. My friend got me to the hospital when it reached that point.

If I believe in God, it's because he acts through my friends. I've had to learn that not all friends are friends, though. For a while I was leaning on a group of people that had been part of a therapy group dealing with ritualistic abuse. We continued to meet informally after the group ended. I was trying to figure out if I could possibly be involved in a local cult and not know it, when they kicked me out and told me not to come back. I was not involved in any cult anywhere, but, of all the times I needed support, this was it. I was forced to lean even more heavily on my 'normal' friends who had not been abused, and knew little about rituals like mine. I spread myself out. I talked to one friend on Monday, another on Tuesday, and still others during the rest of the week so I wouldn't wear them out.

About a year later, an incest support group started, and I went to that. It took me a long time to open up in that group, and I cannot and will not talk about my cult experiences there. We've been meeting for about two and a half years, and I am finally able to get and give support regarding the incest. For a long time, I needed people to question me, to ask me things; it was a way to get internal permission to talk. I couldn't volunteer information, but if somebody asked, I could tell them.

The hospitalizations were helpful. In a sense, everything was helpful and nothing was helpful. But I was a danger to myself and needed to be put in a safe environment. My memories and flashbacks were putting me into shock. Neither hospitalization tackled the remoteness and isolation I felt with my family of choice. I was in such a confused fog that I could not set goals or participate in setting them. I just wanted to know what had happened to me.

The second hospitalization was more helpful, and helped me recover a lot of memories because they specialized in therapy for ritually abused people. The first hospital stay was in a general psych ward, and I had an awful time being with men in that setting. Both times I had a male therapist, and I reacted very badly to hairy arms and mustaches. I could never trust enough to deal with the abuse issues. I won't do that again — have a man for a primary therapist.

Now? I'm not triggered nearly so much. I don't have the nightmares and flashbacks I used to have daily. I can walk down the street and go to church without getting tripped off. My

therapist has worked hard at getting me into the here and now. She encouraged me to enroll in a community college, and it went well. Now I'm enrolled full time and working on a BA degree.

I fought her every inch of the way because she wanted me to live in the here and now, and not in a shadowy hell. But I didn't stay in bed in despair over Christmas. I went shopping for my kids for the first time in four years. I sometimes play games with them and bedtimes have become fun, sharing times. I'm quick to tell my kids that if someone says no tickling, it means no tickling; that No means No.

I still get a little weird, restless, and edgy on holidays: Halloween, Candlemas, Christmas, Easter, Whitsunday, the equinoxes, solstices, Mother's Day, etc. I tend to isolate worse around those times. My husband and I talk more intimately, and I can tell him what I want and need, and accept his needs and wants as legitimate too. I laugh now, and sometimes I can remember jokes.

One evening in my incest group, we were asked to go around and tell each person something good about them. Then we were asked if we believed the good things that were said about us. I said yes, of course. Then we had to tell four qualities we didn't like about ourselves. I had to own up to being dishonest; it is very hard to believe the good things people say about me. I said it partly as a joke, to be funny, but it is partly true. What I mean is that so many times in the cult I had to hold opposing things as true. I hated my dad and I loved him. The abuse felt good and it felt terrible. It was exciting and it was horrifying. I still feel split, as though I hold these opposites in my being. What's a lie and what's the truth?

This winter was a cold one, lots of ice and snow. At one point I looked out my window and saw my neighbor's huge cedar tree bowed with snow. Two branches had split off and fallen to the yard. That's how I feel, like part of me split and broke. I know that with warm weather the snow will fall off the branches and they will lift themselves up to the sky again. My winter has been and my spring is coming soon.

Spiritual Growth

The Gentlepeople

When I started to look at my religious issues, I had no idea I would be stepping into a cesspool. I figured that basically my religion was sound. I assumed that it would be useful for all of my life, since this is what the church had promised me.

When I remembered the ritual abuse, I realized that my Christian beliefs did not account for my experiences. How could such a caring God let such horrible things happen? I could no longer accept that this was part of God's will. But I made no connection between the Christianity I was taught and the satanic ritual abuse I survived. I assumed the ritual abuse was a psychological issue, something for my therapist to deal with. I didn't think it had anything to do with my spirituality.

Was I ever wrong! The Christianity I was taught had control over my whole life. 'God's will' was to be carried out in all relationships, vocational choices, emotions, and was to shape my self-concept. Everything I did, thought, or felt had to conform to the church's definition of 'God's will.'

The cult beliefs were not all that different from the Christianity I was taught. Rather than contradicting it, the cult belief system extended the Christian one.

The church taught me that humans are so evil that God cannot live with us as we are. It was only through the crucifixion of Jesus that I could have a relationship with God. Without this human sacrifice, I was spiritually dead and fit only for Hell.

The cult extended this by saying that since I was so evil I might as well give up on God. It would be easier to be controlled by someone who likes evil people. I was told that no matter what I did, I would never be good enough for God. God was not interested in me. Satan, at least, could be appeased.

I was also taught by both belief systems that everything that happens is God's or satan's will. The Christian belief was that God was trying to get my attention if things were not working out as

they should. I was supposed to determine how I had sinned and to repent my sins. The cult was more direct; the abuse was ordered by satan. I should not complain, because it was my spiritual duty to allow and welcome continual abuse.

I was not supposed to value myself in either belief system. The church said that self-esteem was the sin of pride, valuing myself over God. It was considered idolatry, the first step to spiritual ruin. The cult taught me that I was created to be used for satan's purposes. I was a physical shell to be used for sacrifice, often sexual sacrifice. To believe myself to be worth more than that was to be 'too good' for satan and the cult. They worked hard to convince me of my nothingness.

In both belief systems, I was taught never to consider my own needs. Many a Sunday School classroom had the acronym JOY posted: Jesus, Others, Yourself. If I made JOY my priority, I would have a spiritually satisfying life, otherwise I would be selfish. Even in the church, I was not supposed to notice what harm other people were doing to me.

This whole mess fell apart when I contracted pelvic inflammatory disease, a sexually transmitted bacterial infection of the reproductive organs, from the abuse. The whole spiritual system I had depended on disintegrated and I experienced an immense spiritual and psychological crisis. My entire life was in pieces. I was bereft.

Healing has been slow and difficult. The hardest thing to deal with is the all-or-nothing thinking. I was programmed by both systems to believe I had to accept their whole world view, every detail of it, or I was lost. The fear in learning to think for myself has been unbelievable. I was terrified that if I rejected one small idea, I would lose everything, including my relationship with God. I was taught that it is a terrible thing to reject or misunderstand God. He will hate me, and the consequences will be eternal.

Meditation and very honest prayer leads me through the fear and out of the all-or-nothing thinking that has plagued my life. I sense the presence of a female deity, who I call the Goddess. I feel supported, nourished, and empowered, as I never have felt before.

I didn't realize how much I had changed until I got my Bible College alumni newsletter. I wrote this prayer the day I received it.

"Dear Goddess, I shake my head at my own bemusement. The thing I most feared has happened. And it's okay. It's not tragic. It's not upsetting. It just is. When I started out on this journey, my biggest fear was that I was going to lose my faith. I was scared that

beyond Christianity there was nothing but a void. I have discovered that this isn't so.

"I have come to know you in your graciousness and kindness. I have learned of your care and concern about the smallest aspects of my life. I have come to know your Presence.

"I cannot believe the years I spent shackled to a belief system that allowed no alternatives. It was their way, or no way. I have discovered that there is a different way. It is a way of loving mercy, doing justice, and walking humbly with you.

"As I read that alumni letter I realize how profoundly disrespectful it is of you. You do not need people to preach. You are here. You are present, and you teach each person as they need. As you promised, the time has come when people do not need to say, "Know God." You are known to all that call on you.

"You are enough. You offer me a life of abundance. You are not stingy. There are no games, Goddess. You do not have to be appeased by 'politically correct' speech or conformity to the correct attitudes. You do not need to sit on some throne, throwing orders down to be obeyed. You have no need of that.

"I thank you."

Testimony

Claudia Mullen

Excerpts of testimony given before the United States of America Advisory Committee on Human Radiation Experiments, March 15, 1995.

MS. MULLEN: Good afternoon. Between the years of 1957 and 1974, I became a pawn in the government's game, whose ultimate goal was mind-control and to create the perfect spy, all through the use of chemicals, radiation, drugs, hypnosis, electric shock, isolation in tubs of water, sleep deprivation, brain-washing, verbal, physical, emotional and sexual abuse.

I was exploited unwittingly for nearly three decades of my life, and the only explanations given to me were that "the end justifies the means," and "I was serving my country in their bold effort to fight communism."

I can only summarize my circumstances by saying they took an already-abused seven-year old child and compounded my suffering beyond belief. The saddest part is I know for a fact that I was not alone. There were countless other children in my same situation, and there was no one to help us until now.

I've already submitted as much information as possible, including conversations overheard of the agencies responsible. I'm able to report all this to you in such detail because of my photographic memory and the arrogance of the doctors — the arrogance of the people involved. They were certain they would always control my mind.

Although the process of recalling these atrocities is not an easy one, nor is it without some danger to myself and my family, I feel the risk is worth taking.

Dr. L. Wilson Green, who claimed to have received fifty million dollars from the Edgewood Chemical and Radiology Laboratory as part of a TSD or technical science division of the CIA, once described to Dr. Charles Brown that "children were used as subjects because they were more fun to work [with], and cheaper,

too." They needed lower profile subjects than soldiers or government people.

So, only young willing females would do. Besides, he said, "I like scaring them. They and the agency think I'm a god, creating subjects' experiments for whatever deviant purposes Sid and James could think up." Sid being Dr. Sidney Gottlieb, James, Dr. James Hamilton.

In 1958, I was to be tested, they told me, by some important doctors from the Society or the Human Ecology Society, and I was instructed to cooperate. I was told not to look at anyone's faces, and not, — try hard not to ignore — to try hard not [sic] to ignore any names as this was a very secret project, but I was told that all these things would help me forget. Naturally, as most children do, I did the opposite, and I remembered as much as I could, but [sic] Dr. John Gittinger tested me, Dr. Cameron gave me the shots, and Dr. Green the x-rays.

Then I was told by Sid Gottlieb that "I was ripe for the big A" meaning [Project] Artichoke. By the time I left to go home, just like every time from then on, I would remember only whatever explanations Dr. Robert G. Heath of Tulane Medical University gave me for the odd bruises, needle marks, burns on my head, fingers, and even the genital soreness. I had no reason to believe otherwise. They had already begun to control my mind.

The next year, I was sent to a lodge in Maryland called Deep Creek Cabins to learn how to sexually please men. I was taught how to coerce them into talking about themselves, and it was Richard Helms, who was deputy director of the CIA, Dr. Gottlieb, George White, Morris Allen, were all planning on filming as many high government agency officials and heads of academic institutions and foundations as possible, so that later, when the funding for mind-control and radiation started to dwindle, projects would continue.

I was used to entrap many unwitting men, including themselves, all with the use of a hidden camera. I was only nine years old when this sexual humiliation began. I overheard conversations about a part of the agency called Ord, which I found out was Office of Research and Development. It was run by Dr. Green, Dr. Steven Aldridge, Martin Orne, and Morris Allen.

Once a crude remark was made by Dr. Gottlieb about a certain possible leak over New Orleans involving a large group of retarded children who were being given massive doses of radiation. He asked why was Wilson so worried about a few retarded kids, after all, they would be the least likely to spill the beans.

Another time, I heard Dr. Martin Orne, who was the director then of the scientific office, and later head of the Institute for Experimental Research state that, "In order to keep more funding coming from different sources for radiation and mind-control projects, he suggested stepping up the amounts of stressors used and also the blackmail portion of the experiments." He said it needed to be done faster and to get rid of the subjects or they were asking for us to come back later and haunt them with our remembrances.

There's much more I could tell you about government-sponsored research, including project names, cell project numbers, people involved, facilities used, tests and other forms of pain induction, but I think I've given more than enough information to recommend further investigation of all the mind-control projects, especially as they involve so much abuse of the radiation.

I would love nothing more than to say that I had dreamed the whole thing up and need just to forget it, but that would be a tragic mistake. It would also be a lie.

All these atrocities did occur to me and to countless other children, and all under the guise of defending our country. It is because of the cumulative effects of exposure to radiation, chemicals, drugs, pain and subsequent mental and physical distress that I've been robbed of the ability to work and even to bear any children of my own.

It is blatantly obvious that none of this was needed nor should it ever have been allowed to take place at all, and the only means we have to seek out the awful truth and bring it to light is by opening whatever files remain on all the projects and through another presidential commission on mind-control.

I believe that every citizen of this nation has the right to know just what is fact and what is fiction. It is our greatest protection against the possibility of this ever happening again.

In conclusion, I can offer you no more than what I've given you today, the truth, and I thank you for your time.

(Applause)

DR. FADEN [Committee Chairperson]: Thank you for your presentations. We appreciate that this is not an easy thing to do. Are there comments or questions from the committee? Duncan?

DR. THOMAS (Committee member): ...where were your parents through all this? Do you have any idea how you were recruited in the first place? Did they — do you have parents, and did your parents know anything about what was going on? ...

MS. MULLEN: ...The way I got involved was I was adopted when I was two and a half by a woman who sexually abused me, and then she was a friend of the chairman of the board of Tulane University at the time, and as a favor to him, she — I began to show symptoms of, you know, typical of childhood abuse, when I was very, very young, and she asked him to recommend a psychiatrist, and he recommended Dr. Heath, who was involved with the project already, and, so, when he discovered that I already had been abused from the time I was practically born, and that I was — had the ability to [dissociate] and that I had almost perfect recall, and I passed all the personality tests that they gave me, he suggested me for the project, and, so, that's how I got involved into it.

My father had no idea, and he died when I was very young, but I don't know if my mother knew or not. I don't think she really cared, to tell you the truth, and then she died when I was teenager. So, after that, they had access to me.

DR. FADEN: Lois?

MS. NORRIS [Committee member]: You mentioned that there are others across the country who are coming — who are recalling similar things. Do they all cover the same time span, generally, or do you have a feel for that?

MS. WOLF [Claudia Mullens' therapist]: Yeah. Generally, they cover the same time span from about the late 1940s until — see, one of the things that we're hearing about is people that were assigned to monitor them in case they should start to remember because it's so horrible what was done, so we're not exactly sure when the actual experimentation took place and when it got into just the monitoring to make sure that they were still under control, and not everybody is being monitored.

So, but, yeah, pretty much, I think, from the late '40s through the 1970s, and maybe even into 1984.

MS. MULLEN: Later than that, I found out, because after my parents died, then there was no one to protect me, to monitor that she spoke of. [sic] My particular monitor was a physician at Tulane University, and, so, he was a family friend, also, of my mother's, and he just kept on making sure that I kept going back and forgetting.

MS. WOLF: So, it's kind of unclear as to when — whether it stopped or whether it — you know, where the —

MS. MULLEN: They still monitor you, though. That's why I am taking some danger in coming here today, because I'm still being watched.

MS. WOLF: I know this sounds unbelievable, but I mean there's actual — she gets stuff in the mail. She gets phone calls. People have been writing things on her house, using the pseudonym that they used when she was at Tulane, and only they have knowledge of that name.

MS. MULLEN: My real name was never used, ever, in anything. So.

MS. NORRIS: Were they all children at the time?

MS. WOLF: Yeah. All children. And the thing is, is as therapists, we are trying really hard to figure this out, and to get as much information as we can.

Claudia's memories have been verified, a lot of them, because the way I have approached this is as I don't read in the field. I don't — and, so, as people give me information, I send them to experts, like Alan Scheflin, who has a lot of information, and then he'll get back to me to confirm or deny. He has never denied any information that I've sent him.

Some of it can't be [verified] because we don't have all the information, but a lot of Claudia's memories have been validated, and they're not in any published source. The only way she would know the things she knows is if she filed Freedom of Information Act information, and this is what Alan Scheflin is telling me.

So, I have every — and then I have been very careful not to know a whole lot, so if someone tells me something, I don't even cue them that — because I don't know either.

DR. THOMAS: It seems to me that documentary evidence is going to be key to establishing the truth of these cases.

MS. WOLF: Yes, absolutely.

DR. THOMAS: It's hard for me to imagine that a program as large and as complex as you people have described could have gone on for so long without a great deal of documentation.

The question is where is this documentation now? It becomes a Catch-22 if it is said that all of the documentation resides within the CIA files, and all of it's secret, and they won't give it to us. But what you've described is a pattern of very complex organization which involves plenty of people outside of the CIA as well.

Therefore, there must be a substantial amount of documentation which could be discovered. You just mentioned about the letters that some of you are still receiving. There is a lead to documentation.

Can you describe for me what efforts have been made, either by yourselves or by other people who are working on this story, to try to track down some of this documentation, and what you meant a

moment ago when you said that some of these memories have been verified or validated?

MS. WOLF: Okay. Dr. Alan Scheflin, and you have his resume in the documentation and a statement from him about Claudia in your documentation, he has been for the past twenty years filing Freedom of Information Act filings to get this information, has been piecing it all together.

Other people across the country have been doing the same, going back to the government files, getting what they can, and what they've also been doing is writing books, sharing information. So, he has actual Freedom of Information Act information.

The problem is that it's — when the requests are going in now, they're being slowed down or denied or just kind of lost in the shuffle, and the information is very difficult to get...

COMMITTEE MEMBER: Yes, we have some of this material.

MS. WOLF: Okay. And, again, it was, you know, what I could pull together in about a week and a half from across the country, but the consistency of the stories, and the thing is, we want to verify it.

So, Alan has amassed over twenty years from Freedom of Information Act [requests], from memos other people give him or sharing information, a lot of information, but we don't have the complete story. There's still a lot of stuff that we don't know, and that's what we're trying to find out...p

DR. THOMAS: Does any of this documentation specifically refer to radiation experiments? Because we are told by CIA that they never did any radiation experiments. So, what we need is documentation in order to pursue that.

MS. MULLEN: All you have to do is look up anything on Ord, the one that I mentioned that I overheard them speaking about. That was almost strictly radiation, and that was run by Dr. Steven Aldridge, Martin Orne... I gave you project numbers, project names, sub-project numbers, even the subjects. We were given numbers ourselves for each specific experiment, and I overheard my number because they would — they would assume that — they would use techniques so that you would forget. You know, when you go home, you wouldn't remember what happened. So, they just talked freely in front of me. That's why no one ever hid their face or wore a mask or anything, because they knew that I would not remember, and I didn't. I didn't remember until two years ago.

MS. WOLF: And, also, I think you can follow up on Dr. L. Wilson Green. I don't know if you've come across him, but he seems to have been involved in both, and I think realistically, in terms of

the mind-controls, some of the subjects were used in mind-control radiation. Some, as you've been hearing, have been strictly radiation, and some were strictly mind-control.

I think the reason it's coming up now is because in some of the stuff people are remembering, they knew that it would break down. They really worked hard to induce amnesia, and they knew it would break down, and I think in the last couple of years, that that's what's been happening, because we're hearing more and more, and, you know, — so, we're just trying to find out what's happening here. That's — so, we'd appreciate any help you could give us on that.

DR. FADEN: We can clarify what we don't have, what we do have, and whatever it is we can put together, and we thank you very much ... for your traveling from New Orleans to present to us.

An Almost Unbreakable Circle

Carli

I have never written about what happened. I am now thirty-seven and have lived in total isolation for the last nine years. I almost died several times, and I lived in my own world of voices, threats, and fear until three years ago. I didn't even know what the words 'incest,' 'sexual abuse,' or 'cult' meant, and I certainly didn't know that my family was involved.

It is almost impossible to express to a normal human being what it is like to be still alive after what happened or, to describe my states of mind. All this in a body that looks normal and human from the outside.

I have no witnesses to what happened. They all deny it. I broke off contact with everybody who has the same family name that I do, including my sisters. Their denial makes it very, very hard to take myself seriously, and every detail of horror has to come from my memory.

I grew up in The Netherlands in a Protestant family that followed the Bible and the Ten Commandments strictly. My normal, accessible, conscious memory is so Christian, my father so like God, my mother so like the Virgin Mary, that it feels like a sin to even want to remember. I had to create and live with this good Christian world as my only reality, and I buried my other life.

In order to survive, my mind split in pieces and I developed multiple personalities. What is officially, theoretically, called 'my life' is an endless story of abuse, of others controlling me, and has little or nothing to do with something that is supposed to be a 'me.'

I feel like I survived the Holocaust. Although it is obvious by now, I still don't want to believe it. My life was destroyed the moment I was born, because the abuse started immediately after my birth and only got worse. The realization that I was abused from birth is critical to me. I just can't accept it. It is totally unacceptable.

My whole life, I tried to be a good daughter, a better daughter, the best daughter, to save the family with my loyalty, love, and dedication. Yet even when I still lived with my family and did not remember anything about the abuse, I was aware that my roots were rotten.

Until about the age of ten or twelve, I was abused by my grandfather, father, mother, and uncle. They abused me sexually, emotionally, and physically, and lent me to a satanic organization to earn money. They went to church and told me that God wanted it that way. I survived by thinking, "The more often they rape me, the better person I am." All I wanted was to be a good person. The weirder the things they did, the more guilty I felt, the more I wanted to become that good person, and the more I accepted that I was bad and therefore needed more abuse.

One day my uncle came for a visit, and I must have talked about it. He blamed my parents and said he would save me. He said I would have a whole new family if I would go with him. I had never been so happy in my whole life! I was so full of trust, so sweet, so open, so thankful that he had promised to help me.

He took me away from my parents' home. At the gasoline station, I had to go to the bathroom. He came in and 'did it' with me. Totally unexpected. I had been so happy, without fear or self-protection. I couldn't believe he did that to me. On that day, for me, my hope for a good life ended.

From that moment on, instead of helping me, he raped me. So 'help' meant 'rape,' like the raping father meant 'God.' My whole reality was reversed.

With my uncle's 'help,' life became even worse. He took me to an organization that played the most disgusting sexual games with children. Groups of men and women tried everything they could think of to amuse themselves. They had sex with all the different parts of the children's bodies, blindfolded them, and turned them around and around in a circle. Torture, electroshock if you moved when they told you not to, endless rapes by lines of men.

They killed a child and told me that I had done it. From that moment, I ceased to exist. They used my guilt over that child's death to make me destroy myself. They said that harming myself was a good way to 'make up for what happened.'

At a certain age, they hypnotized me so that I would not be able to speak about it. They gave me a post-hypnotic order to kill myself if I started to remember. Later, when I was close to remembering, I did try to kill myself. The memories appeared only when I was at the point of dying.

If I force myself to think that life is important, that my life and I, myself, am important, I feel strange and awkward and very far away. Life itself seems like a bad joke. I experience a constant fear of death, twenty-four hours a day. I feel that my life is somebody else's possession and that I don't have the right to do what I want with it.

I feel so ashamed and abnormal; I don't feel I have a place in society. I am scared to death of all human beings, although I don't show it. I don't feel I have the right to say no, and, without meaning to, I am always nice to everybody and always do what the other person wants. As a result of the hypnosis and programming, it seems that everybody has control over me. I cannot communicate in the normal world; therefore, I am not capable of working.

I have no sense of my own identity. I don't know who, or what, I am. I do not even know that I live in the body of a so-called 'human being.' However strange it may seem, I don't know that I am still alive, that I live. If I look in the mirror, I don't recognize 'that lady' as 'me.'

Using hypnosis, the organization forbade me to have an identity. I had to live in their service and obey them; they taught me that I was and always would be their possession. The programming and triggers were so scientifically done that the triggering experiences keep repeating themselves, and, today, all people are a constant threat to me.

After years and years of travel, and of being seriously ill, the authorities helped me get my own house in Holland. My address is secret and I will soon be changing my name. In spite of my new, still unfurnished home, I continue to live in isolation, in two countries at the same time. I experience my surroundings and neighbors as a constant threat, and feel that I am constantly being watched, observed, and controlled. I just can't feel that '1997 people' are any different from my parents or from the people in the organization.

The programming tried to turn me into a copy of the organization's members, and my assigned task was to do the same thing to other people. Rather than obey, I do the opposite. When I talk to somebody, I become a duplicate of them. After the conversation, I have disappeared and there are 'two of the other person'; I have imitated that person. It is awful.

It is so hard to make myself want to stay alive. The memories of the films that were made of me, of the laughter of the men as they watched them, of being forced to do things with my mother. The hardest thing of all is knowing that they killed a child, a child

who was my own sister. Why should I bother to live when she is dead? What is the point?

I want to end by saying that every day I commit myself to the fight with full intensity. I get my strength through defiance, through anger. By looking at a tree and thinking that I will not be fooled by what they did to me. This tree is perfect. If a branch is cut off, another will grow.

Even if I have to fight until the day I die, I will not accept this condition as my destiny. I would rather be dead than a cripple for life, a person who has to 'live with what they have done to her' as a justification for how she is, or as a way to get comfort and pity from other people.

Impossible! I have suffered too long to accept that, and I have seen too many trees with cut-off branches. I will never allow them the credit of destroying my life and everything that was or could have been dear to me.

One thing I know for sure; they never ever expected me to live, remember, and not go insane. They never expected me to escape the programs, torture, conditioning, threats, and fear. They never expected me to escape from an almost unbreakable circle by looking at a tree.

They Can't Steal My Future

Joshua

My Dad taught me to read tarot cards before first grade, and my Mom taught me all sorts of other things about the occult. Mom was real, real mean. I once told her that mother was just a word in the dictionary. My Gram said I was special. She loved me and she got me tarot cards with pretty pictures. They said if I don't do what I'm told, they'd take the cards away.

My brother raped me in the upstairs bedroom when my parents were away. He said I had to let him, or he would say I made him do it. That happened when I was eight and nine years old. Earlier, I was raped by two men when I was in bed and my parents were having a party. And when I was nine, the hockey coach, before practice, made me stay in the dressing room and perform fellatio on him. This continued the whole season. My Scout leader did the same thing that year. There were other things, too. The Children's Aid Society investigated my parents at least three times.

Later, after I became Christian, I told my mother about these things. She laughed it off, and said that I had always enjoyed sex, and now that I was a Christian I was just having regrets about what I had done.

During my teens, my mother continued to encourage me to learn all about the occult and gave me books and tarot cards, even after I became Christian. When I was fourteen, she told me to have sex with anybody I wanted, and when I was fifteen, she sent me home with a forty-two year old woman to have sex. I slept with many of her friends, ranging in age from twenty-five to sixty; on the couch, in the bedroom, many different places.

When I was twenty-one, I started to remember still other things that had happened in a satanic cult led by my mother. I remember the names of lots of her friends who were at the rituals, and the names of some of the other kids. Black men from the Caribbean, who belonged to some sort of club that my mother went

to, were also at some of the rituals. Perhaps things also happened when I was in the Caribbean on vacation with my family.

I told my counselor, and then the police. Several times after that I was raped, sometimes by men, sometimes by women. I was also kidnapped and taken to rituals. After being raped, I was questioned about what I remembered and made to draw pictures about the rituals that I was describing.

I went into hiding, moving to eighteen different places over the space of two years. They hired private investigators and found me every time. Finally I decided that if they were going to find me anyway, I might as well stay in one place and get on with my life. They had my past; why should they steal my future, too?

Now I am trying to finish college, and I live with other young Christian men. I am multiple, and different parts of me like to do different things. For example, I play rugby, collect tattoos (for the pain, probably), do cross-stitch embroidery, and have lots of books like Paddington Bear and Winnie the Pooh. I don't care if the other guys laugh at me.

I haven't been bothered too much since I got back. I think they know I'm not going to stop being Christian and go back to serve 'the black one.' They know they can't get me to stop remembering, and that I have met other ritual abuse survivors who have gotten away and who have memories that overlap with mine. I have a lot of support, including the Dean, who knows I'm multiple and all, and is cool with it.

I'd like to tell you all my memories, but there are too many. I'm just going to share parts of two, so you can relate if you want to. They hurt a lot. I hope they won't hurt you. I hope they will make you feel less alone.

Once, When I Was Six

it's dark, cold, and slimy. i can feel the dirt and the worms. i can feel the creepies crawling on me. so scared. so dark. wanna cry. but if cry they hurt others. no want cause others hurt. trying not to cry. Mommy why did you give me to them? why am I not yours any more? no like new mommy. she mean. not like.

they come for me, can hear them, they lift stone and pull me out. man with no face is there. i can see him, i can hear him, but he has no face. he mad cause i cry. shouts at me. Stop, stop, stop that noise. You are ours now. You will always be ours. No one wants you. We can do what we want to you.

noooooooooooooo not a bunny. they soft and fuzzy and fun to play with. no no wanna hurt bunny. man without a face grabs my

hand. puts sharp in it. no no wanna hurt bbbbuuuuunnnnnnyyyyyy
plllllleeeeeasse

sharp is pretty, four stones in handle. one under each finger.
wavy sharp. two green stones at either end red and blue in middle.
like playing with sharp. wanna hurt me not bunny.

nnnnoooooooooooo bunny is all red. gotta stop the blood. too
much can't hold it shut. noo no die no die no die ppillease

now they take my clothes off. rub blood on me. touch me all over
with bunny pieces. my bunny my bunny my bunny

Once, When I Was Twenty-two

A field, soil, ground, no crops. Me on a wooden altar. Lots and lots
of candles, big bonfire north of altar. No, or only a few, stars out.
People in black robes with white trim. Mom and four others in
white robes with black trim. They form the points of a pentagram
north of the altar. They are chanting and calling on demons to try
and get me to deny the power of prayer. I am a Christian Prayer
Warrior and have PW shaved out of the back of my head to prove
it.

My mother's friend is there in white with three other men.
They bring out a little baby boy and put him in the fire. They say
that they can do the same to me. They say I'm going to hell anyway
and satan will save me from the flames if I serve him.

They bring out a huge black horse and say he is to be my steed.
Then they pour piss and shit on me, possibly from the horse. Then
they put bugs on me. I can feel them crawling all over me. They
show me a large sword and say it is mine, and a red robe with black
symbols on it. They dip the cross I am wearing in blood and spit on
it.

The guys in white take turns with the women in white. I am
aroused, they tease me to keep me up, but they won't satisfy me.
They shoot a clear liquid into my scrotum with a needle. They put
a rat between my ankles and I can feel it moving up between my
legs. Then they paint me with symbols in blood. The women in
white both mount me and take turns with me, one on my privates
and the other over my face.

Then they tie me sideways over the altar and back up the
horse so its butt is in my face. Hard to breathe. Raped by the guys
now. Each thrust pushes me closer to the horse. Then they move
me very close to the fire and tell me that those are my choices. The
horse, the fire, or betray Jesus.

I don't remember any more.

One for All and All for One

The WallFlower Children

I am a survivor of ritual abuse and I am a multiple.

I grew up in a small town in Canada. I was raised Catholic, although my family wasn't really strict about the religion. I took my First Communion and my Confirmation, and after that I sometimes didn't go to church for weeks at a time. My mother's parents, however, were very disciplined in their faith, typical 'good Catholics.' They went to church, sometimes twice a week, and celebrated all the holidays, fasting quite often. Our family and neighbors thought of them as nearly saint-like.

My grandfather was also part of a satanic cult. I think he was a multiple too. I have no other way of explaining the wildly conflicting behavior he exhibited. When we were around family, he was a doting and loving grandfather. When I was alone with him, he was a monster.

I don't know if he was part of a cult when he lived in Germany, or if he was indoctrinated when he moved to Canada. Considering his standing in the cult, he was most likely involved for a major part of his life. He made some sort of deal that his first grandchild would belong to the cult. I don't know what this deal was, only that it involved money owed to the cult or the cult leader.

My earliest memories are of my grandfather sexually abusing me in the basement of his house shortly before I turned three, to prepare me for the cult by doing enough damage to make me susceptible to dissociation. My first alters were created in this basement. I should say here that I, the writer, was not the child that was born. I, and Sam, the overseer, were the first split.

Sam is the system's creator. She decides how my system is laid out and the functions of my people. She rarely comes out, as she is an internal worker. My system is set up in four Units.

Unit One people have daily roles in my life. They are out often, have friends, and do a lot of the day-to-day living. They are highly functional children and adults, very concrete to me. Unit One

people are the only ones I can easily talk to. Unit Two is empty now. These people have shifted into Unit One. I am still not sure why this happened.

Unit Three people are my healing alters. The majority of them are adult or very, very old. They call themselves white witches. They sometimes set up triggerful situations for me so that they can look at what the programming is and try to dismantle it. They only do this when I am feeling very strong, and they always appoint three members to watch over me, and make sure I stay safe. They do this only when I am in a safe place, at home or at my therapist's.

I don't know much about Unit Four people. I know that this is the cult Unit, alters who were created by the cult for specific roles, and alters who were created spontaneously to fill certain roles. I have not yet been able to communicate with them.

I have to admit that these parts of myself really scare me. My therapist tries to tell me that they just need time and a whole lot of love and support to begin talking about their experiences and working toward healing. I try to believe this, but they do so many things that I don't understand, and that scares me and makes it hard to be patient and loving to these parts. When they do self-destructive things, Sam most often won't stop them because she says we all have to learn to work together, and she has limits, too.

Because I know so little about Unit Four, I find myself unable to write a lot about the actual cult experiences. I become numb and my mind goes blank. I can't remember what I want to say. I know that this is their way of telling me they don't want their secrets revealed.

I have remembered a lot in a very short time. I know that there is a lot more. I got out of the cult six years ago, but I have memories of the cult only up to fifteen years ago. I have nine lost years yet to discover, and I dread the things I may uncover. But I also know that my system is strong, and in time I will get through this, and I will get through it alive.

We have talked among Ourselves about what we see as our major goal. So far it has been agreed that we are not working toward total integration. I have lived with these voices, these people, for almost my entire life. For us, Unity is not integration, it is all of us working together, achieving co-consciousness, and living as a team. Our motto is "One for All and All for One."

For so many years, I thought I was insane. I spent months of my high school years in locked psychiatric units. I was labeled psychotic and given high doses of drugs meant for schizophrenic patients. I was called a liar, but had no idea why. I didn't know I

had other parts who were telling people things totally opposite to what I was telling them. All my acquaintances from school thought I was weird, and I never really had friends.

Now we have friends who were ritually abused and who are multiple. For us, that was validating. My friends and I/We are able to share each others' fears and comfort each other in a way that only one who knows this pain can. Knowing others who are going through similar experiences helps me feel less like a freak, and I spend more time on my healing, rather than worrying about my sanity. I know I am not crazy (most of the time); I am not alone, I wasn't singled out for this abuse because of some inherent evil in me.

I also have friends who were not ritually abused that I have shared some of my story with. They are loving and supportive, but more often than not they felt helpless and unable to do a whole lot. They just don't understand.

We have a wonderful therapist who does all she can to make our existence easier. Sometimes when we are going through programming we don't realize that it is programming. Our therapist will talk us through it until we are in a safe enough place to deal with it. Then she helps us to pick it apart and finally realize that it is programming and that we don't have to do what it says. Nobody controls us, we have free will.

Some of us recently realized that art is a better outlet for emotions than cutting is. Cutting just pushed the feelings away for a while. Drawing or writing poetry releases them enough that we can talk about them. For me, emotions have been really hard to express. Even just letting myself feel them has been a struggle.

At home as a child, I was discouraged from showing emotion. Anger was rewarded with a slap. Crying was thought of as weak, and I was called a baby if I did cry. Being happy was important to my parents, so I forced myself to at least look happy. In the cult, emotions could be deadly. Being emotionless was highly regarded. Crying or making noise during a ritual earned severe punishments such as burns, beatings, or removal of body parts. We were strong, the girl of stone.

Because my parents were not involved in the cult, the cult had to be careful not to mark me in any visible spots. So instead of my face or arms, they burned and cut me internally. The inside of my mouth is scarred, as well as my nose and ears and under my eyelids. Any external injuries were explained away as clumsiness. And there was programming to self-mutilate and seek out dangerous situations. I still struggle with that programming.

Numbers trigger us badly. The cult was able to twist any combination of numbers to make them threatening. Phone numbers, addresses, dates, just about anything with numbers in it triggers someone inside. When I was little, I used to sit on the living room floor and count to myself. I would rock back and forth and count all the way to one million. I now wonder if I was trying to deprogram the number triggers. If this was the case, it didn't work. But it shows that on some level I was aware of things that were happening, even though I didn't actively remember them.

We have recently entered a new stage in our therapy, dealing with Unit Four, which is proving to be extremely difficult, draining, and painful. It's a step closer to healing, and one that will take all of our strength and cooperation to get through. Since we have entered this stage, we find it too difficult to continue writing our story. All of our energy and concentration is on getting through Unit Four's revelations and the Christmas season, and on not doing self-destructive things to our body. We do hope, however, that this little piece of our story will help other survivors. I wish you peace, strength, and all that is good.

Day Life and Night Life

BJ and Rebecca of Mich & Co.

My name is BJ and I am part of Mich. There are eighteen of us inside that we know of, and there are more who have not yet shown themselves. I am the one who has written Mich's story.

Mich was raised in a small-to-middle-sized town in the midwest. Her family was upper-class and well respected by the community. Her family was very involved in their church, schools, and the community as a whole.

Along with her siblings, Mich was taught to set goals and achieve them; to win, not to just try her best. To the neighbors, the community, and the county, Mich's family was near-perfect.

In her early twenties, while attending college, Mich was hospitalized. She was diagnosed with major depression, borderline personality, and post-traumatic stress disorder. A few months later, Mich was diagnosed with multiple personality disorder, now known as dissociative identity disorder.

For the past year and a half, in therapy, Mich has begun her long journey through her past. She has to get to know all of us inside (her alters) and we must allow her part of the memories and pain we have kept from her for so many years. At the same time, we inside must all get to know each other.

Mich's family was active in a traditional Christian church and in the community, but things were very different at home. Mich always believed something was wrong, but did not know what. We kept the terrifying, unbelievable, unimaginable, and horrifying secrets of her family from her. Mich believed that her family was simply going through the 'normal' conflicts any family with children has.

When Mich was around eight years old, she tried to kill herself. This was her first unsuccessful suicide attempt. In the years before this first attempt, Mich tried in every way thinkable to please her parents and to make them proud and happy. This, of course, is impossible for anyone, especially a child, to do. She believed if she

was no longer alive, then her parents would be happy and not always angry.

After the first attempted suicide, Mich tried thirteen more times. Her family knew of at least four of these attempts and completely ignored them. Mich was puzzled by this each time it happened, but she did not know the rest of the story because one of us would take or block the memory from her. At home behind closed doors, Mich's parents brutally punished her for her actions.

Though Mich's family appeared to be very religious, we, the Inner Ones, know the horrifying and tragic truth. One could say, they, along with others, were and are now living a double life; a circle of 'Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde.'

During the day Mich's parents worked in the community, but when night fell, so did their masks. They worshipped God-Jesus Christ by day and a few evenings, but at night and on special days they worshipped God-Lord Satan Almighty. The Prince of Darkness, for them, was the True Savior. For a child, it is hard enough to worship Jesus Christ, let alone satan as well.

Many times two people marry and then later decide to worship the same Lord but in different ways. Their children learn two ways of worship, but for the same Lord. Mich had to learn to worship two different Lords in two totally different ways — and to keep one a total secret from the community. Having two Lords, one evil and one good; having parents one moment caring and loving and the next moment terrifying and harmful, and trying so hard to please them and not lose her self; it is no wonder we were created.

In any normal family, if a member passes on, everyone is told of it within hours to a couple of days. In Mich's family, everyone was notified but her. No one told Mich that relatives and even pets had died until weeks after the funerals. No one comforted her when she did finally hear.

She only knew of the death of a sibling because she was present when the police told her parents. Mich sat on her bed and on a chair in the living room watching aunts, uncles, cousins, grandparents, and friends comfort the family she held so dear. Yet for her, there were only us inside and her stuffed animals to comfort her.

When Mich went away to college, she thought things would get better. That did not happen, because her family still had control of her. She returned home for every satanic holiday and whenever else they commanded, though she had no idea of what was happening.

After a few semesters, we found a teacher who was nice and supportive. Marcus (another alter) began to realize that if we didn't

do something soon, the family would have total control over Mich, and therefore over us. He also knew that Mich would not be able to live in this way much longer. From October to January, Marcus began ordering Mich to commit suicide, knowing she would tell her teacher before she tried, and thus get help. Her teacher became worried and asked to meet with her. They talked, and Mich agreed to speak to her teacher's friend the next day. She met with the friend for a couple of hours, and, within a few days, Mich agreed to be hospitalized.

Once hospitalized, we began searching for someone to trust, so we could tell some of our story and be *believed*. Within a couple of weeks we found two people. Now we see one of them three times a week as a therapist. The other is a backup therapist.

It was almost a year before Mich could begin to consider that her father was part of the cult and a cause of the hurt and pain. She had no problem believing that the rest of the people abused her in so many ways, but she loved her father very deeply. While growing up, Mich never saw or felt the pain he placed on her. We, the Inner Ones, were the reason for that. As she grew she began to pull away when he tried to hug her or pat her on the shoulder or back. She never knew why. But each time she would quietly cry for his 'loving, caring' arms to reach out and hold her. When he did so, she went inside and one of us took over. He made her his partner instead of his daughter.

It has taken nearly three years for her to even consider breaking all ties with her dad and the rest of her family. Even now she dreams, wishes, and hopes she can someday have her family back.

Every day Mich wonders if her parents would approve of what she wants and has now. She feels guilty and ashamed if she doesn't call, write, or go home for the 'normal' holidays, including birthdays and anniversaries. The Little Ones cry and beg us to take them home, even though they know it would hurt. And the seven-year-old still cannot believe her Daddy would ever cause her hurt or pain.

With all these differing attitudes and feelings about her family, how can Mich live a normal life? She now lives one day at a time, one hour at a time. Given the confusion she was raised with between respect and responsibilities, living in a secretly sexually, physically, emotionally abusive satanic cult, it is remarkable that Mich lived through it at all.

Some people ask, "Why didn't Mich speak up, tell an adult when she was a small child?" In fact, she did tell some adults, but

they ignored what she claimed, or left town within a few days. The Circle (the name the cult called itself) used torture, mind control, threats, and shame to keep the children silent. The Circle knew that the majority of people would not believe a child's story of being abused by satan. It just doesn't happen in today's society, in America. *But it does!!!*

My name is Rebecca, and I have more to add to what BJ just wrote. In the Circle, Mich and the other children were sex dolls. Mich had to perform many different sexual acts, including oral sex, anal and vaginal intercourse, fondling, and sodomy on other children, adults of both genders, herself, and animals. She even had to perform some of these acts on dead bodies. Many times the Circle took photographs and videos while the sexual acts were being performed.

Along with Mich, other children (either of the elders or stolen from another state or country) were put through the saddest, most horrifying ordeals. Mich was placed several times in places not fit for animals, much less for a small child: in basements chained to a wall; in a cement or stone room with a small drainage hole in the center to catch her urine and only a small slit in the top of one wall to allow light through; in small boxes or coffins, sometimes with mutilated human bodies. Placed in a deep, narrow, cold, damp hole in the ground with bugs everywhere, Mich saw snakes crawling all around her. She also saw four naked lifeless child bodies across from her, with only their blood covering them. The snakes got them before they could climb out.

This was the beginning of a new life with the prince of darkness, satan. Mich lived, and because of that she rose to a new level in the Circle. After a few more tasks and tests she became the high priestess. Mich could not handle these tasks and tests so I, Rebecca, was born.

Many of the other alters were born to endure the satanic duties. In some cases she was given the choice to sacrifice the life before her or to trade places. In other words, kill or be killed. In the beginning, the high priest placed the child's hand on the knife and then his on top of hers, to help and to show her she really was a part of it all. No one could expect a child to tell an outsider about taking part in a human or animal sacrifice.

Many have asked, "If satanic rituals and sacrifices are happening, then where is the hard evidence?" The answer is, many times, "Right under your nose." Much of it is somewhere between the ritual grounds and a mile away. Many remains are buried underneath a fresh grave where a casket will be placed and then

covered with dirt. The Circle knows people are reluctant to dig up a coffin buried with Christian rites. And by the time a child remembers which grave site it is, the body could have been moved. This confuses the child's memories so people will not believe. The Circle also teaches how to remove evidence by cleaning the area and replacing moved objects to restore a natural look, to become one with the woods where a ceremony occurred. Not only that, but many members hold high official jobs in the community, state, and country.

Each word here was written by the alters of Mich. Though she did not say them directly, they are hers. Mich agreed to allow us to write some of her story, so all can learn, believe, heal, and help stop ritual abuse. Mich has not read this story yet, but in time she will be strong enough to do so. The road to a safer, healthier, and more productive life is just beginning for Mich and Co.

God's Gift of Healing

Megan Peters

Something happened last October that changed my life dramatically. I became a whole person. When I told my spiritual director, who knows me well, he gave me words to think about like 'leap of faith,' 'gifts of God,' and 'answered prayers.' He asked me if I could receive these gifts and give thanks. That is how I came to be writing today. I need to try to put into words the greatness of my healing and to share it with all of you.

So you can better understand the importance to me of this miracle, I want to give you a little background. What happened to me as a child was evil, terrifying, and, for many people, unbelievable. My father belonged to a satanic cult, and, when I was barely two, the training started for me to become a member of the cult. It involved brainwashing and systematic torture and the breakdown of my will.

I developed multiple personalities to cope with all that went on day after day and night after night. This means that different parts of me developed independently of the original 'me' to cope with specific tasks, feelings, or problems at separate times, so that not all parts were present all the time. Because each part had completely separate beliefs, feelings, and memories, communication between parts was often non-existent. Events could act as a trigger, causing me to switch, often into a part that was frozen in time at a very young age. When these parts were in control, I lost time. Each part held only a small picture of what happened over time. This was important, because it enabled me to survive.

Some of the parts integrated periodically over a space of time. When that happened, the parts no longer acted independently but were incorporated into the whole, and I lost less time.

I would like to tell you what it was like to be multiple.

A time came when I knew I would have to tell my younger son that I was multiple. He was thirteen and living in a foster home,

and we were in therapy together every other week. I thought it would be very difficult, but in fact it was quite easy. I had told the therapist several months earlier, and one day in therapy I got lost. Something triggered me and the co-conscious mother part of me was gone. I don't know how much time I lost, but by the time I came back, my son looked stricken and demanded to know what happened to me and where I had gone. He was really scared.

When I told him I was multiple and explained that I had many separate parts of me that ran my life, he responded with relief, "Well, life with you sure makes sense now." His comment was an incredible gift, because over the next years I could see how my life made sense to me, too; not just my childhood, but also events in my adult life.

Imagine that you are on stage about to give a speech. You have note cards in your hand and there are a thousand people in front of you, but you have no idea how you got there. You don't know what year it is, but your notes indicate it is the late 1950s. Sometimes it was like that for me. I would be somewhere doing something and have no idea what was happening or what the conversation was about. Sometimes people said "you're sure quiet tonight." Well, in my early years of recovery, I was quiet a lot because I was trying to figure out what was going on around me.

Going shopping, especially in a mall, was tough. I used to park my car and pray I didn't get triggered, because if I couldn't find the part of me that went into the mall, I couldn't find my way back to the car.

My son learned to cope with me. One time when he was fourteen we went to buy him some clothes. We entered the mall in the toy department of a store. My inside kids came out instantly and wanted to play. My son immediately came to me and said "Mom" several times to bring the Mom part back. He made a deal with Mom that if she wrote the check to get his clothes first, the kids could have ten minutes to play before we went home. He knew where I kept my keys and how to find a driver inside me. Luckily he knew where the car was because a different driver came out and drove home. He never took me to the mall through that door again.

I had several alters who ate. If I ate too fast, others didn't have a chance to eat. I know the body has only one stomach, but what is full to one alter might be empty to another. I found I had to leave evidence of eating dinner until the next morning, or I found myself going out to the kitchen to get dinner all over again. The hazard was that sometimes I was looking at the dishes of the night before, so I didn't eat at all.

Now back to my childhood. Just before I was seven, my family moved away from the satanic cult my father belonged to, but he found other people who were into evils just as tortuous and unbelievable. They had all been in various groups before, and they pooled their horrors and thought up more of their own. In one of their rituals, I was raped and became pregnant. Just before I turned twelve, when I was five to six months pregnant, my first baby was sacrificed on Halloween.

After that, we moved again. There, my father, who frequently molested me, got me into prostitution with a group of men who came together on a monthly basis and bid for me. The highest bidder got to go first, and then the others took their turns. In the process, I got pregnant three more times. Those three babies were killed in various rituals. When that happened, the nights seemed very long. Not that any of the nights seemed short.

When I was seventeen, I finally told my father, "No! I won't have sex with you any more." To prove my point, I attempted suicide right in front of him by slashing my arms. I told him if he ever came into my bedroom again, he would find me dead in the morning. He believed me.

I forgot all of this until eleven years ago, when, during a family crisis, my memories started coming back. My minister and I spent hours discussing where my faith came from, because it was obviously there, and it was a very deep faith.

I found comfort in the church liturgy. The language was familiar, and when I heard it I knew I was in a safe place. Now I know why I have been so opposed to changes in the liturgy. In the cult they changed the words around and made everything backwards. When I go to churches that use newer versions of the familiar words, I become very confused.

Here is an example of a small change that is still very difficult. In the Creed the old words are "He became incarnate from the Virgin Mary and was made man." The last words were changed to "became truly human." This reminds me of being raped in the cult by a man with a mask. Before he finished, he took the mask off and became human. What seemed like a small simple change to some was a very big deal to me.

Two years ago I went to a week-long workshop on meditation and healing. It was a major turning point for me. I met a woman who was a gifted healer and clairvoyant. She didn't know anything about me. On the first day she and the workshop leader did some laying-on of hands because I had gotten triggered and was in trouble. She saw things I knew, but she didn't know that I knew.

The next day we talked about what she saw and what I knew. It was a wonderful confirmation of what I was learning about my past.

During one of the music meditations that week, I had a good memory. I hadn't had many good memories up to then and was overcome with joy in the moment. I remembered how the angels came to me when I was very young in the cult and kept me warm and aware of the light. They helped me stay awake when I needed to and get to sleep when I was afraid. My sharing about this sparked a wonderful discussion about angels with everyone there.

In another meditation, in front of an icon of Mary, something very special happened. At the last minute several people moved away, so I was alone in front of the icon of Mary. She spoke to me in that mediation, and I was able to let go of the guilt around the deaths of my babies.

About four months ago, I had what I called, at the time, a spiritual rebirth. In a bodywork session, a spirit guide appeared and said she was sent by God at my birth to protect me. Because of my previous ten years of work, I could reconnect with her. I had to get to the horror before I could see any good, and see where Spirit entered my life. That reconnection helped me move forward to my healing at the end of October.

I would like to share a few Biblical quotes that speak volumes about my healing path and the direction of my life.

The first is from the book of Micah. Because Micah came from the common people in a small village in the Judean foothills southwest of Jerusalem, he saw the corruptions and pretensions of Jerusalem through different eyes. He said, "with what shall I come before the Lord and bow myself before God on high?... Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" I had to struggle with just this issue on my path. I lost four babies to the evil of my father. But Micah goes on to say, "and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice and to love kindness and to walk humbly with your God?" In learning to walk humbly with God, I have been able to let go of the pain of my past and live in the now, each moment as it comes, knowing I am being wisely guided.

When I went to twelve-step meetings, I heard "Let Go, Let God." For a long time that phrase bothered me. I struggled with believing God could help me work through my pain, or even believing He was there for me as it happened. I learned that it was my faith in God and my ability to split that helped me live through my tortuous childhood. As I learned to let go, I could see God's work

in my life. In First Corinthians I found comfort in the verse that says "For God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom and God's weakness is stronger than human strength." If this is so, I know whom I want to have in control, and it's not me.

Psalm Thirty-Seven contains answers to my questions about the evil in the cult, my path, and my right to "take delight in the Lord and He shall give you your heart's desire." This psalmist speaks to our anger and rage about evildoers and invites us to let go of it. I have found that if I get angry at the evildoers, then I am participating in the evil myself. I feel that this Psalm means letting go of my anger and frustration, in which these evil people seem to flourish. Can you imagine the hell they must live in inside themselves that drives them to need to control everything? This Psalm speaks eloquently about trusting, about being patient, about commitment to God leading to the reward of our heart's desire, about abundance of peace, and about being upheld by God. I'm so thankful I didn't get into that evil. When I understood the fullness of the evil and hurt, I was able to forgive and I found great freedom.

The Beatitudes is one of my favorite parts of the Gospel. A footnote in my Bible says that the Beatitudes proclaim God's favor toward those who aspire to live under God's rule. I especially like "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God." It has been very important for me to know where my faith comes from. If I am not holding on to the anger and rage, then my heart has more room to be open to God's love. The purity in my heart comes from my spiritual discipline of letting go. As I let go, my heart becomes more open and pure and then I can see God and I can take delight in life.

In the cult, Halloween and the two days after were the highest celebration of the year. In the past it has always been the hardest time of year for me, and Easter has not been much better. This year, after the fact, I now know that by the grace of God, I was gifted with a spontaneous integration of the twenty-five parts of me that still remained separate, interfering with my life. My spiritual director helped me sit and talk to God. I was told I had worked hard enough, so God helped me leap over what was left. Receiving this gift has been a very difficult task. Learning to live without voices telling me what to do and to live without fear, confusion, and pain has been my work since then.

My first partial integration happened a few years ago, and I have had many others since. Some of them have been very special, and at the time the loss was considerable. But this spontaneous integration was a miracle, because it happened in the midst of a major change in my life, and so close to Halloween.

So, what does this all mean? First of all, it's quiet! I don't have all those voices telling me what to do, where to go, or to be careful, even though some of the voices were very loving, caring, and protective.

Imagine that you are in a restaurant, and everyone is talking all at once. You can't understand what they are saying, except for hints of conversations at the tables around you. How much you hear depends on how crowded the restaurant is. Or imagine the old-fashioned radios, which were sometimes hard to tune to the station you wanted. You were trying to get the news, but you had music floating in from another channel, an ad from still another, and static thrown in, which made it more annoying. That is what I was hearing in my head all of the time. It made it hard to sleep or to know if what I was hearing was a conversation with someone in the here-and-now, or with someone in my head. Well, everyone in the restaurant has gone home, and we now have digital radios. The voices and static are gone in my head. It's that quiet.

Life is different now. I haven't had a migraine in over three months. I used to have three or four a month. The confusion and fear are gone. When I have an asthma attack now, I can figure out why. It's not because someone inside got scared or angry or thinks I need protecting. I have asthma attacks because of an allergy. And I am not in pain anymore the way I was. Now, I know I hurt because of a tight muscle, and I know what to do to release it and get myself out of pain.

I don't lose time any more. Being present in the moment all day every day is very new, and I get tired easily. In the past if I got tired, that part went inside to rest, and another part came out and took over. I'm finding it difficult to be gentle with myself, and I realize I can't do as much in a day as I used to.

At age fifty-five, I am learning what most people learn as a child. When babies start crawling, they discover that they can crawl out of the room where mommy is and still be safe, and they have choices of how close they need to be to feel safe. I never learned that. Since my job of nineteen years has ended, I am looking for a new job. As I do so, I have to be mindful that I have choices, and if a place doesn't feel safe, I don't have to stay. I didn't know that until last month. And when my son came to visit for the holidays, I didn't know it was normal to feel sad when he left.

I have surpassed every goal I have ever set and have gone far beyond goals I couldn't even imagine, so it's hard to set new goals for myself as an integrated multiple. Since my job ended, I have been considering what I really want to be doing. I would like to be able to use my healing talents, especially with people who have

been abused. Last week I decided, with God's help, to go to massage school.

Meanwhile, my healing continues. I give thanks every day for the healing that has taken place and will continue to take place. I pray for guidance in this world that is new to me, but familiar to so many of you. I may still be quiet a lot, because now I need to hear how other people feel about experiences in their lives to help me know that my own new feelings are appropriate for a given situation.

God loves all of us, even the evildoers. He may not like what we are doing, but He still loves us. So I try every day to take time to sit and be quiet, to listen and ask for what I need, and to pray for others. It was in being open and praying for others that I found myself being included. I am very grateful for all of the people who support me and the many gifts I have received from them. Praying for what I needed, and receiving, it has changed my life. If you pray for an abundance of healing and love, your prayers just might be answered and your lives could be very different.

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

The Children of Me

Elizabeth

Where to begin? Basic history: forty year old professional woman of the midwest. I am currently healing from a dissociative disorder. I have lost count of all the little emotional selves inside, but we are gradually merging into three or four distinct selves. As the merger continues, I have noticed changes in my speaking and writing styles, which are not as stiff, precise, or grammatical. It appears my little selves are expressing themselves. This is our story and will be written by all of us.

I began counseling because I did not like my behaviors or my life. I was a functional drunk with pervasive feelings of uncertainty and valuelessness. I was a perfectionistic, tense workaholic involved in an unhealthy relationship.

I am the youngest child born to parents who, had they chosen different partners, might not have become so evil. They practiced their methods of abuse on my siblings. By the time I was born, they were well versed in the methods of inflicting markless, scarless pain, emotional and physical torture, and perverse sexual abuse.

With the help of a counselor, long-term friends, and a sister and brother who never doubted me or my experiences, I have come this far — eighty-five percent healed.

Healing, for me, has been in rounds. I struggle, almost drown or give up, surface in peace, and experience a short reprieve. Another round won. As time and healing go on, the reprieve between rounds of struggle and the actual peace and well-being are longer and more definite, but the rounds are more devastating and difficult.

It took months to trust my counselor and gain the strength to end my abusive relationship and sever ties with my parental figures (my choice). Learning to trust my counselor also helped me to trust my sister, brother, and a group of long-term friends. These people became my surrogate family.

Two of these friends (who are also life partners) went beyond friendship and took me deep into their hearts and home. One of these women held the terrified children all night, many nights, for months. She listened to their stories, calmed their fears, and gave them safety. She gave the Children of Me the gentle, supportive, non-sexual touch that all children need to grow. She learned more about human inhumanity than anyone need know, and she shed the tears that I could not.

This woman's partner provided a secure, trust-filled, and safe environment. She also spent many conversationless hours fishing with me. She never looked at me with suspicion as I lay on the riverbank and gave the pain to mother earth or the moon. Never in my life had I experienced such non-sexual, non-demanding, non-judgmental, conditionless love. Their months of love and support provided me the strength to continue my professional life and remain a functional member of society.

The first group of children to emerge have been named 'The Many and the Almost' and consisted of nine little ones ranging from six months to six years. These children experienced extreme terror and torture and were fucked in unimaginable ways by the male and female parental figures as well as by the oldest male sibling. On these children, the parental figures practiced and perfected their craziness. After months, this round was complete. The children were safe and healed and I felt peace. It was finished. *Wrong!*

The next round consisted of many nameless children who experienced the parental figures' 'spiritual' growth. These children were taken to the 'spirituality group' at least weekly. The group was headed by a local judge and his mother. Many of these children are splintered off of one another. My mind held a large, dark room in which these children waited their turn. Many died after one turn of 'spirituality.'

This 'spiritual group' was into animal torture and sacrifice, which created the joys of blood, death, and sex for the members. A lot of rabbits and dogs died painful, useless deaths. I'll never forget the sound of screaming rabbits and dogs.

After animal torture created a crazy, out-of-control environment, child torture began. The child torture included, but was not limited to: burning, electric shock, needles and pins in the hands and feet, choking, cutting with a ceremonial knife, and smearing of animal parts and animal blood inside and out. A favorite threat, made as the knife was drawn down the chest and stomach, was that the child would be skinned alive like the animals.

After the child was beyond terror, the fuck-frenzy began, both with the child and between adult group members. Afterwards, the female parental figure performed a ritual, which she had perfected at home, of cleansing inside and outside the child's body with alcohol and a toothbrush. I guess I should thank her, for this practice controlled infection.

I am not certain how many little selves were present at each meeting. I know many pieces of me died and many shared the experience to prevent mental overload, insanity, or death. Healing from the parental figures' 'spirituality' was difficult and involved. I cannot honestly say it is completely over.

How long the parental figures were part of the group, and when they left, is very unclear to me. I suspect the group disbanded due to the death of the leader's mother. Around this time the parental figures moved the family to another state. They did not seek another group; not due to a change of heart, but due to fear of detection, I think. The terror, torture, and abuse continued for many years at home, however. The Children of Me of this time span are much less distinct and are shadows without personalities. Existence was all they experienced, and existence was abuse.

As I grew, the parental figures' insistent forced labor backfired. My body became very strong and my attitude was cold and unfeeling. I think they feared the person they had created. I began working and providing for my own financial needs at fourteen. Long hours of work, school, and drinking kept me from their house much of the time. I left on my eighteenth birthday.

I wish I could say "and never went back." I was well conditioned to care for them in their old age, which I did until seven years ago. I have not seen or talked to them for these seven years, but I hear that their abusive behaviors have continued, directed now at their dogs and each other.

They are paying for their actions. They are in poor health, elderly, and alone. Few of their children talk to them on the phone. They rarely have visitors. They seldom see any of their many grandchildren and have never seen any of their great grandchildren. What goes around comes around.

How and why my body survived is unclear. I have three distinct memories of dying, but they brought the body back each time. My mind and mental capabilities survived because somehow the self knew how to splinter and separate from the physical reality.

The Children of Me are very spiritual and in touch with goodness. The child's spiritual self survived, I believe, because the abuse began on the infant while she was still connected to the God

Spark. The God Spark allowed the child to know the parental world was corrupt. The child saw God's beauty in flowers, birds, trees, sunshine, and music. Also, as children, the sister and brother I am still close to provided the child with comfort and love.

With visual imagery and a vivid imagination, I have been able to provide the Children of Me a safe haven in my mind. It is a playground, surrounded on sides, top, and bottom by a force field that prevents intrusion from past or current threats or abusers. Each child has what she needs. For example, the one-year-old has bugs to watch; the four-year-old has flowers to grow and tend. Trees and birds are abundant, a mountain is available to the mountain kid.

It is an amazing place. Music is piped in and adds to the calm and peace. A library is handy for the intellectual kids, art supplies are available to the creative ones, a fishing boat and ponds are there for the laid-back ones. There is a beautiful and peaceful graveyard for the ones who died. All the Children of Me are compatible and safe in this playground. The older ones hold and comfort the babies and toddlers.

The majority of the Children of Me are finally in the playground, I think. I allow them to come out whenever they want. We have an agreement. They cannot come out if the adult is at work or in an unsafe situation, such as driving. Otherwise the children come and go as they wish. In especially safe environments, such as at my sister's, they come and go with humor and laugh because she doesn't notice. Her little boy notices and he knows when to start wrestling or playing a game of tag. Life with the Children of Me is interesting, to say the least.

It's the adult who needs guidance now. I am very unsure about living normally. What is 'normal?' I don't know what people feel or do. I have not fully acknowledged that the children who suffered the abuse are 'me.' Also, we are experiencing the grief of what we never had and never will have — a mom who wanted and loved us.

Currently, I have three selves; the kids, the professional adult, and someone I've not yet become, who is like a big empty space. This empty person is like a fish out of water. Flopping around, looking around, and wondering how others live and breathe in this world. This step is very hard. Going from damaged goods to a whole woman is tough.

I am extremely fortunate. I had the financial means to support counseling and a concerned counselor who gave me a discounted rate. I had a terrific core-group of friends who are still standing by me. I also had an extremely supportive brother and sister who

confirmed my experiences and never doubted me. These siblings are also healing from their childhood experiences and I hope I am giving them the support they need.

All in all, life is fine. It's not terrific yet — maybe some day...

More Than Sub-Human

Karen Mann

The abuse took place for only one year, when I was seven. At that point, the perpetrators moved away, and a few years later my family moved out of state. I have never been back.

Aryan Supremacy was the excuse for the abuses. The woman that led these Aryan women, all mothers, had her own personal evil, which she cloaked in racist purist terms, and I believe she invented many of the tortures for her own pleasure and need for power.

In order to survive the abuses, I isolated many of the events into separate spaces within me. This is the first time I have attempted to view the experience from a cohesive viewpoint, and I expect that the fragmentary nature of the feelings and thoughts will still be evident.

I was a child playing in the woods behind our house. Seven, curly blond hair, creative, intelligent, and alone. I was snatched, or enticed, into one of two mysterious buildings in the woods behind our house. My clothing was removed. The rest took place in the other building. What happened that first day set me up for the rest of the year.

I can barely think of the images of that day. Rationally, they are too unbelievable. Emotionally and physically, there is too much evidence for me to disbelieve. I can no longer deny the events, I can only refuse to look at them. Now that I am trying to write, as a witness and to honor my secrets and my survival, I must look.

In the second building, in the darkness with a little natural light and a few torches, a knife was placed in my hand. My hand was held and assisted to murder an infant. Its blood used to 'cleanse' me. I was placed on a table, the dead infant on top of me, and handed a knife with a hook. I imagine it was a skinning knife.

A loop of rope was placed around my neck. If I did not slice the infant on my own, without assistance, I would die.

The woman leader kept encouraging me to join them, telling the woman at my head when to tighten or loosen the rope. Choose to join a horrible, fantastic nightmare or suffocate at their hands. I wanted to die. Sometimes I still wish I had. Not dying is a source of anger and shame, and it is hard to forgive myself. But I experienced the raw animal will to live that is completely blind to morals, emotions, or reason. I did what they commanded.

The infant's entrails were wrapped around me, symbolically joining me to the group. I became for them a symbol of Aryan purity; the conduit, the ceremonial core for birthing perfect children. Their ideology became the rational explanation for the abuses that followed.

(As I write, I see the events as a whole and my soul screams. I also fear being recognized. I forgot that those involved have aged, too.)

What followed in the next months were step-by-step ceremonies in the birthing process. Some make sick sense to me now, others are beyond my comprehension.

I was used in various ways in the impregnation ceremonies. Some of the abuse entailed a 'master father' ejaculating his sperm on me, and in me, perhaps so that I could be symbolic of perfection and fertility. I was made to sexually stimulate the women, and was also placed between a copulating couple as the symbol of the desired perfect Aryan child.

Bloody things were inserted into my vagina and then squeezed out. I was wrapped in things, and then I was squeezed out. Everything was apparently done to separate out any polluted thoughts or people. There was one right way and only one. One right human form and only one. If I couldn't do the ceremonies, or showed fear or weakness, I was no better than all the other dirty, lazy, evil, semi-humans in the world.

There was an organized hierarchy; the Master Aryans (like an alpha male and female), the Mothers (including those about to become mothers), the Acolytes (thirteen-year-old girls), and the conduit (me). There might have been other children my age, but I did not interact with them.

I still carry an inch-long scar from one ceremony involving an acolyte. She was learning how to sexually stimulate with a knife, and gave me a deep cut. I remember the master's rage at the acolyte for wrecking the ceremony and soiling me. To cleanse me,

she wiped me with a flammable liquid and lit it, then held the knife in a flame and cauterized the cut.

I still have a hard time understanding the rationale behind some of the acts of abuse. One time, the female master had sex with me. It seems to me now that she dressed to resemble Hitler, or there was a poster of him nearby. (I did not know about Hitler back then.) And one time the men brought in a dead vagrant. He was violently desecrated, his head bashed open, his penis cut off, and I was violated and smeared with pieces of his body. Perhaps they thought that I, as the conduit, could separate out the pure human elements from the subhuman and pass on the purity to the participants.

And then they moved out of our neighborhood. And a few years later we moved out of state.

I am amazed at how brief these descriptions of events are. The struggles I have had over my lifetime with each of the above incidents described in one or two sentences has been horrendous. Like any event — a car accident, the death of a friend, a mugging — the actual time it takes to impact on life is brief, but coping with it takes incredible strength and long stretches of time.

An Altar Boy's Nightmare

Kamin

Over the past three years, I have been admitted to a psychiatric hospital over fifteen times. I lost the fear of suicide and tried to kill myself on several occasions. I had long battles with anorexia and bulimia. Intense anxiety attacks were an everyday occurrence. The depression was so deep that it felt like I was at the bottom of a pit and could never climb out. My professional life collapsed. In the middle of it all, my wife left and hasn't spoken to me since. Life was about as difficult as life could possibly be.

The past flooded me, and I remembered all those horrible things I had 'not worried about' as a kid. It was as if someone had opened a time capsule or Pandora's box, and out came a torrent of memories and emotions. These are the things I remembered:

I was an altar boy in the third grade. Father J. came along in the sixth grade. During the summer of seventh grade, he took me and a few other boys to his parents' rural home. I remember falling asleep in a room with the other kids. The next thing I knew I was in his bed, with him doing things to me. I spaced out after that. I don't know what happened to the other kids that night. I do know, however, that nobody spoke of it the next morning.

I only directly remember Father J. hurting me, but there are sometimes little flashes of other priests. Flashes of other kids. Flashes of rituals. I generally say to myself, "There's no need to remember more. I remember enough." The extent of the abuse is unclear, and it is unclear if I am multiple or not, but I feel no need to recover any more buried memories at this time.

The incidents became more frequent, and Father J. kept getting closer to me and my family. I remember quite vividly that every time he came to the house I was never in on the conversation. I was just petrified to talk with my parents and him at the same time. He called me on the phone almost every night, and I had to sneak so that nobody would hear. He said he loved me and made sure I said it back to him. I hated that!

If I ever showed any signs of resistance, he became very angry. So I made a decision that it was better to have it happen and have him enjoy it than to have it happen and have him hurt me more. Holidays were especially bad, because those were times when he could justify to my family his needing me to spend extra time at the church. Easter in particular was always horrendous; it meant utter confusion because it was the holiest season of the year and he was always invoking God, saying that He wanted this.

Once he locked me in a coffin and told me he'd bury me if I told. He buried me in the sand at his house on the lake and forced me to suck on his penis until he came on my face. He tied me spread-eagled to his bed in the church rectory and repeatedly raped me while I stared at Jesus on the Crucifix over his bed. All this done in the name of God. These things are enough to remember.

The priests always treated me as if I was special, kind of like an angel or perfect kid. Not *a* child of God, but *the* child of God. They explained that what was happening to me was because I had been chosen by God. And so I had to accept what was happening, because they made me think that if Jesus could withstand being crucified, I could take a priest raping me.

My parents never knew anything. I was too scared to tell, because Father J. had threatened to kill them. My behavior contained many hints, though. There was a lot of sexual acting out. My grades went from all A's to all D's. From sixth grade on, I stayed awake at night staring at the clock, thinking that he would come and hurt me. I lay in my bed for hours, not wanting to breathe, and then I got up the courage to sprint up to my parents' bedroom and sleep with them. It felt safe. It was really only at night that I felt the fear of what was happening to me.

When I started high school, I told a priest who also knew Father J. that I needed to talk to him about something personal. I remember walking around the front of the school and telling him about the abuse. He said that I must have misinterpreted Father J.'s actions. After that, Father J. started picking me up at school to take me home. He held my hand in the car, kissed me, forced me to say I loved him, and then made me submit to his desire of the day.

In the fall of tenth or eleventh grade, I was searching for ways to make it stop. I remember he bought me a special robe that I was to wear at all masses. One Sunday I backed into a candle intentionally to catch it on fire.

Not long after that, my mother called the church rectory and the housekeeper said I was in Father J.'s room. The rest is but a blur. All I remember was that he was warned and I got dressed

quickly, and the next thing I knew I was in my mother's car, crying. What happened after that I cannot remember.

My father tells this story: that my mother got me, that I was crying, that when I got home they questioned me as to whether he 'touched' me. They claimed I said "NO!" Then my father went to the church and demanded to know from the pastor what happened to me. The pastor brought Father J. down and asked him if he ever touched me. Dad says Father J. got on his hands and knees in front of both of them and started sobbing, saying he didn't.

When cleaning earlier today, I found a picture of the Baby Jesus with a halo which used to hang over my bed when I was little. It upset me when I looked at the back and I saw in pencil the inscription "INRI." Here I was, a little boy fixated on the crucifixion of Jesus Christ.

A lot has happened over the past few years. I have changed in more ways than I could have possibly imagined. I have lived through depression. I have lived through panic attacks. Right now I am neither anorexic nor bulimic. I have lived through the suicide attempts (sometimes only barely). Today, right now, I want to live.

The sad truth is that underneath all the symptoms was a great deal of unspoken pain and memories, both bad and good. When I began speaking of the pain, it was as if a hand reached into the cavern I was in and pulled me out.

Now I am not afraid to speak of the pain, to speak of what makes me scared, to speak of what happened. I look at everything in a completely different way. Now the world feels safe enough for me to be open-minded and open-hearted.

I feel I am a wiser person because of what I have been through. I take time to breathe the fresh air, listen to the birds, have fun, talk to people. I think and feel now instead of reacting instinctively to just survive. I play all sorts of sports; I play the piano, and I write. My professional life is beginning to flourish. I am reclaiming all the pleasures of life that were taken from me, while at the same time reclaiming the sadness and the anger. But the best thing of all is that I feel whole and I feel safe.

As I finish this, I cannot help but feel sad that the things that I remember are not from a nightmare. They are true. I am working to stop Father J. from lying to, taking advantage of, manipulating, and abusing other children. And with the last bar of Chopin's Nocturne in C-sharp minor for piano and violin playing in the background, a tear comes trickling down my face. It is a tear from my heart, which they never broke.

Creativity

Nancy

My name is Nancy. I am in my late forties, a social worker, a wife, mother, daughter, sister, and survivor.

For the first fifteen years of my life I survived multiple abusers. By the age of five, I was well acquainted with the violence of rape; I just didn't have the vocabulary to express what was being done to me. In a world of perversion and fear, I had developed my own creative ways of coping with the invasion to my mind and body. It was at a very early age that I employed one of my most clever means of coping. I learned to separate my mind from the body.

If the body was feeling pain, the mind could focus in an entirely different direction. In order to keep functioning, it was necessary to establish a code that I could understand, and so I began assigning names to the 'parts' of me that had to experience the abuse.

I pursued other means of expressing myself as well. While learning to play the piano, I discovered an endless outlet for releasing a variety of emotions. No one ever had to know why I played with such passion. Music gave me a way to speak without being recognized. It took a skillful amount of cooperation, and my parts would not always work together. Once I forgot a recital piece the night of the performance, and played "Three Blind Mice" over and over until my teacher finally ushered me from the stage. That was all Hannah knew how to play, and that day no one else came out to play for her.

As far back as I can remember, I have always loved to draw. In the third grade I tried my hand at realism and attempted to draw the scenes of some of my abuse. Unfortunately, during the fifties, very few teachers were aware of what pornography by an eight-year-old really meant. I was promptly sent to the principal. Not one to be discouraged, I just continued drawing the same scenes, but I drew alone, behind my house, with matches handy to burn the evidence once I had completed my work.

In fourth grade I tried once again to share my knowledge of human anatomy, this time while finger-painting. I quickly remembered that teachers' lack of appreciation for such art; so I simply kept adding colors until I had one solid mass of black. Hanging next to my classmates' pictures, it said it all for me.

My last attempt to show my abilities to a teacher occurred in an eleventh grade health class. We were learning about reproduction and had been given the assignment of drawing the male reproductive organ. Needless to say, mine was textbook-perfect. I was accused of tracing, and given an F for the assignment.

But art can take other forms, and I never ceased to find a medium. Around age ten I began creating dozens of tiny villages all around the neighborhood. Using sticks, clay, rocks, leaves, anything I could find, I built elaborate homes and scenes, right down to the tiniest campfire imaginable. This world of little people had been in my mind for many years, a place where the people were so small that no one could find them or see them.

As I grew into adulthood, I continued to create. I found a new medium in fighting poverty, injustice, abuse, and a multitude of social ills. My artistic tools were compassion, love, and determination. God directed my energy into areas that others couldn't bear to even think about. A ministry to an entire community was established, and remains in full service today.

Writing is an incredible and empowering method of expression. I was privileged to be able to send a letter to the parole board recently requesting that they not release a known sex-offender. I am happy to report that he is still behind bars.

Through each and every endeavor, I have continued to seek ways to express the inexpressible. Whether it be through drawing, painting, music, writing, hands-on involvement in helping others, dance, creative play, or ways yet to come, I know that those multi-parts of me continue to share in the process of 'speaking the unspeakable.'

The Past Cannot Be Changed...

Amy

I don't want to believe my memories. If I do, then people who were close to me not only committed the horrific acts of incest I have come to accept, but also were involved in heinous acts of ritual abuse that go beyond the realm of the believable.

My first incest memories came in 1989, when *The Courage to Heal* was one of the only sexual abuse recovery books on the market. I spent four years in therapy and support groups exploring my incest memories and their effect on my current life. I went from being a successful business woman who was numb to her feelings and had no memories of her childhood, to a suicidal person who collected disability and was constantly in a state of emotional upheaval, to an assertive somewhat confident graduate student fighting to get back into the working world.

Things were looking up for me. I was beginning my Master's of Social Work, making new friends, and learning healthier ways of living. I was still having incest/abuse memories about once a month, which I considered a great improvement over the past few years.

Seemingly out of nowhere, like a blanket engulfing me, suffocating me, I had my first memory of ritual abuse. I was only a pre-schooler when it happened, so it was confusing and unclear. It just didn't make sense. I was afraid to tell my therapist, because I was afraid she would think I was crazy. I *felt* crazy — not the same kind of crazy I felt when I remembered the incest, but a fearful, terrifying kind of feeling. My reluctance to disclose my memories was overshadowed by a stronger need for some relief from the pain I was experiencing. I couldn't look my therapist in the face when I told what I remembered. My words were punctuated with sobs, deep breaths, and statements like "You are going to think I am crazy."

She was wonderful, and responded by saying, "This has happened to other people." I was shocked. I was aware of ritual

abuse before, but I did not interpret my memories as that, even though they were similar. I guess that was denial, or perhaps the hope that it was something else.

Ritual abuse was something that happened in other people's families, not in mine. As I had these thoughts, I forced myself to remember that I had said the same thing about incest four years earlier. Denial was becoming more difficult to maintain.

During the month after my first memory, I had a deluge of new recollections. The flood gates had been opened. Some memories were very clear, others were sketchy. (Most of the events I remember happened when I was between the ages of three and seven, so they come from the perspective of a small child.) Some seemed similar to what I had begun reading about ritual abuse, others were unlike anything I had come across.

I wanted to know everything about cult abuse and everything that had happened to me, so I joined a satanic ritual abuse support group that met monthly. There I received validation for my feelings, but specific memories were never discussed. In the beginning, I was disappointed that details of the abuse were not talked about because I desperately wanted to know what had happened to the others. Later, when I was accused by the perpetrators of having 'false memory syndrome,' I was glad that war stories had never been exchanged.

I spent some of my therapy time discussing whether or not the ritual abuse really happened. I wanted proof and validation. The abuse seemed so absurd that at times I couldn't believe it was real. My therapist helped me realize that I would probably never know with certainty which of my memories were real and which the cult had brainwashed me into believing. "What is important," she said, "is how you live your life." I liked that. Her words helped me take the focus off the specific incidents of abuse and helped me concentrate on my recovery.

I decided to drop out of the ritual abuse support group after about six months. I had established that my situation was not unique, but I did not connect with the other members. Many of them had been diagnosed as multiple personalities, and I had not taken that route in my quest to survive. Many seemed invested in their pain and current fears of the cult. My abuse had stopped at age seven, so I was not exposed to the horrors that many adolescents and young adults endure. I understood and appreciated their experiences, but didn't feel challenged to a higher level of recovery. I did not want the fact that I was a ritual abuse survivor to be the major focus of my life.

After I left the group and began viewing ritual abuse as just another type of mistreatment I endured in childhood, the memories seemed to subside. Sometimes when I feel a memory coming on, I can push it away by saying to myself, "Go away, I don't need you any more. I know why I feel bad. I don't need any more validation." Of course, some memories do not go away on their own, and I need help in therapy to process them. But the time between recollections becomes longer and longer, and I focus more on my struggles to get back into life's mainstream than on the details of specific memories.

There is a lot more I would like to know about the details of my ritual abuse, including the doctrine and purpose of the cult, the names of some of the members, and the usage of drugs and brainwashing. This will probably never happen unless the perpetrators get out of denial and into some type of recovery program. I doubt if that will occur, but I do not need it to feel okay about myself.

The details don't matter anymore. What matters is that although they succeeded in terrifying the little girl I was twenty-five years ago, they failed to kill the spirit of the adult who continues to grow and blossom in spite of what happened.

I have a plaque in my room that says "*The past cannot be changed, but the future is whatever you want it to be.*" That is the creed by which I try to live my life.

Sadism, Christianity, and Power

Nettie Sullivan Teague

I never heard of Christian sadistic ritual abuse. When I first recovered memories of childhood sexual assault, I went into shock at the violence of my memories: memories of gang rape, sadistic torture, religious fanaticism, and forced prostitution. As I met other survivors of extreme abuse, I never looked for ritual abuse survivors, though all the other prostitution survivors I met had been ritually abused.

As we shared our stories, I began to think the words: Christian ritual abuse. Hearing satanic abuse survivors' stories, saying "that happened to me, but they were Christian assailants," hearing other survivors of Christian ritual abuse tell their tales, I came to name myself as a survivor of Christian sadistic ritual abuse.

All ritual abuse survivors struggle to tell and find hearing. This is even harder if we remember abuse by legitimate, established religious groups, such as Christians. This is a country mired in Christian belief, and to be Christian itself is synonymous with being good in many people's minds. Yet the majority of ritual abuse survivors that I know are survivors of Christian ritual abuse. We've all heard the same thing: "Real Christians would never do that; what happened to you isn't real Christianity; you shouldn't be bitter about Christianity." We hear the underlying message in these words, too: what happened to us does not matter.

All of us in our society conspire to see child abusers and rapists as 'other,' as drooling monsters totally unlike our families, friends, and neighbors. Satanic ritual abuse survivors face intense skepticism, but at least they are not pointing a finger at the dominant religion of society. Satanists, at least, are seen as bad guys. We survivors of Christian ritual abuse are pointing fingers at the good guys, so we have to be political. We did experience 'real' Christianity, and we continue to experience real Christian denial.

When I talk about what Christian men did to me, I am telling a story about power in this country, power of men over women,

adults over children, with Christian supremacy used as a weapon. My story shows the influence Christianity has on all our lives, ritual abuse survivors or not.

The man who first raped and later pimped me was the first adult to pay attention to me as a child. He lived next door; his daughters were my only friends, and he showered me with praise. My parents were not Christian, but my mother was happy for me to know a friendly Christian family. She trusted them, so my friends' father had unlimited access to me. He called me his 'special friend.'

He started raping me when I was four. It was "God's will." God had made me for him. I remember a blur of rapes over a few months while my special friend taught me "what God made girls like me for." He began torturing me with hairbrushes, scissors, and knives, explaining that the torture was to teach me "God's discipline." He made me pray before rapes and before torture, to ask God to make me good and obedient, to declare my absolute acceptance and desire for God's discipline. Not obeying meant further rapes, being left tied up and alone for hours, enduring further torture.

My special friend became my pimp. He brought a fellow parishioner from his church, and together they explained that God's purpose for me was to be a whore for God. I had to give total obedience to any man who paid my special friend, or God would see my disobedience and punish me. They taught me to be a good prostitute, punished me for any hesitation or any tears, and competed in creating religious tests of torture for me.

When I turned five, they brought other men from their church and sold me. Men who wanted fellatio, who wanted to torture me before raping me, or who wanted time talking and playing with me, had to pay more. They hung a cross around my neck, had me hold the Bible during rapes. My pimp brought me to dinners at his church. After dinner he and his friends took me to the basement for gang rape, saying I was God's "offering for dessert." They tortured my genitals with electric shocks. All was God's will. I always had to thank every rapist for helping me serve God.

My worst memories are the assaults they made on me as a sexual being. My pimp had started masturbating me when I was three. My orgasms, he explained, were proof of our special friendship, and proof that God made me for his pleasure. The memories of sexual response are especially hard for me because I never could escape my body when they caressed me, masturbated me with hands and vibrators, or performed oral sex on me. I survived gang rapes and tortures without tears, but I orgasmed in tears and they punished me for crying.

My experiences of ritual abuse all involve this indoctrination into prostitution, into service for male sexual pleasure. My emotional presence was important to many of the rapists, and they delighted in forcing me to feel, often saying, "Feel me, feel my hands." Several referred to their penises as "Jesus" and thus called rape "cleansing" as they used their penises to "put Jesus" into me. Then they said, over and over, "Feel Jesus, feel Jesus cleaning you, feel." My sexual response was part of this insistence on feeling, but was also proof of my prostitute status. They said, "Feel how you are a whore," while forcing me to orgasm. "We can see the real you," they repeated. "We can tell you're a whore."

Attacks on my sexuality were also evidence of my agreement to all of the assaults. My orgasms not only proved that God made me for their service, but also proved I liked prostitution and all that they did to me. They combined masturbating me with other sexual tortures or just plain humiliation. They knifed me and masturbated me, urinated on me and masturbated me, raped my mouth while others masturbated me. For them, my sexual response was God's plan, a source of laughter and jokes, proof of my 'enjoyment.' For me, it was a sense of helplessness and brokenness I still can't find many words for. The men who raped me did not need the tricks some of my friends who survived satanic ritual abuse remember enduring. My pimp and his church friends had my sexuality to play with, and my sexuality ensured my presence so I could feel all their power over me. I still shake while writing about this.

My friends who survived Christian ritual abuse tell of different abuses and indoctrinations, but one common thread runs through our histories. The abusers all used traditional Christian beliefs about women and sexuality as proof of our evil and need for 'training.' Our personal stories are part and parcel of Christianity's historical teaching about women. Thinking about power and religion, systems of oppression, and analyzing sexism have been major stepping stones to understanding my childhood.

My parents moved, and I escaped my pimp and his fellow congregants through luck. I developed amnesia, but continued bedwetting, dissociating, and compulsively masturbating in school and at home. I began making new friends, none of whom were Christian (but I never visited my friends at home if they had fathers). I astonished my parents by becoming close to my Mamaw (a southern Appalachian word for grandmother), who loosely followed folk beliefs about plant spirits she called witchcraft. Over the years I slowly came out of my fog, started praying to trees, read about druids, and denounced Christianity at every turn. I declared

myself an atheist, loudly, and I didn't think of witchcraft or praying to trees as religion at all. My friends, all atheists or Jewish, all also tree-lovers, admired my outspokenness.

Today I'm an adult, a feminist, a lesbian. I discovered feminism and feminist spirituality in college. I still had no Christian friends, since the women I knew had left their childhood religions due to sexism or homophobia. I read feminist critiques of patriarchal religion, including Christianity, and I learned to counsel rape survivors. I learned self-defense; I protested; I learned to organize.

At age twenty-five, I began to meet feminists outspoken in their Christian beliefs, and I could even listen. I don't believe my Christian feminist friends will ever know the leap I make when I listen to them.

Yet to hear about me, they must make a leap, too. Words of great and holy meaning for them can be triggers and can have impossible associations for me. Sometimes we hurt each other in our different understandings, but the hurts are never deliberate, and we move on. We all combat and struggle against the religious right, and struggle in our own religions for feminist equality. Christian or not, we work for justice.

Anyone who wishes to abuse another will use any and all power available; physical power to gang rape a child, or superior numbers to lynch African-American men. One of the weapons that ritual abusers use is religious ideology. Christian ritual abusers have two thousand years of anti-body, anti-sexuality, and most especially anti-female ideology, to force onto children.

It is common to hear that good Christians do not really harm others, and it is only 'pretend' Christians who burned Jews in the Holocaust, or burned witches during the Reformation. For Christian ritual abuse survivors, this stereotype goes hand in hand with other stereotypes of how child abuse only occurs in rural areas or to poor people. The men who raped me did not do so *because they were Christians*, but they used their Christianity, like so many before them, to harm.

The men who raped me fit right in with the fathers of the Christian church. Augustine writes for men to love their wives as they are taught to "love their enemies." He preached for women to follow their husbands' lead, for man is woman's "head," and at death women would be transformed from their earthly bodies, to ones made over "to glory rather than to shame." Augustine believed the greatest of sins was the male erection, and he put blame for male sexuality squarely at women's door; for men to live a

Christian life, they necessarily needed to find women to be "correctly used."

Tertullian was more direct as he spoke to women as daughters of Eve. "You are the Devil's gateway. You are the unsealer of that forbidden tree. You are the first deserter of the divine law. On account of your desert, that is death, even the Son of God had to die." Clement of Alexandria tells women to blush for shame, "when thinking of what nature you are." Jerome tells us "For love befits the man, fear befits the woman. As with the slave, not only fear is befitting him, but also trembling." Thus when my rapists used Christian rhetoric to rape and control me, they did so in keeping with Christian theological tradition.

The rapists of my childhood assaulted me in full accord with the persecution and abuse of women throughout Christian history. They echoed the assaults against witches during the reformation. Until Christian historian Anne Barstow studied and documented the role of Christians in torturing women during the 16th and 17th centuries, only post-Christian philosopher Mary Daly had named the hundreds of thousands that were burned as victims of male sexual violence. Barstow's book *Witchcraze: A New History of the European Witch Hunts* notes that historians choose to ignore the sexual violence men used against women in that time, and that while we half-heartedly acknowledge the Holocaust, we forget that mass genocide carried out against women. In exploring the witchcraze, Barstow documents sexual torture and mind control that makes my severe childhood experiences seem mild. And I feel as though I know the Dominicans Sprenger and Kramer, who wrote the 'bible' for religious witch hunters, the *Malleus Malleficarum*. "All witchcraft comes from carnal lust, which is in women insatiable." Sprenger and Kramer, real Christians, could have been two of the men who assaulted me.

No, Christian sadistic and ritual abuse is not new. Sadism has been part of Christianity for hundreds of years. When some of my friends who also survived Christian sadistic abuse tell me they hate Christians now, it is not because of their childhood experiences. It is because of society's denial that Christians harm others.

I am learning to address this sadism in ritual abuse. I try more and more to say sadistic ritual abuse, to move the focus from religion, and to focus instead on torture as the ultimate reality of our childhoods. The words 'ritual abuse' are not enough to express truths about gang rape, screwdrivers rammed into our bodies, electric shocks on genitals. Nor does ritual abuse always express the realities of control our assailants wanted over us: my

assailants' smiles became broader the more I hurt. They used religious words to hurt my sense of 'me,' but they also used torture.

I believe that the most damaging aspect of sadistic ritual abuse is the interconnection of the religious indoctrination with the ritualism of torture. Religious words and symbols carry a lot of authority, strengthening the already-present authority of adults over children. Sadistic and ritual abuse survivors carry incredible burdens of brainwashing, memories of authoritatively declared slavery. As children we could not separate and understand what was happening.

The sadism and indoctrination coalesced in my sexual responsiveness and inability to 'turn off' to humiliating arousal. I could leave my body during physical pain, and I then floated about on the ceiling, watching. When they forced me to sexual response, I couldn't get away. That was me, with their hands on my clitoris and their penis in my mouth and their gun in my vagina. I was the horrible prostitute God had made to fulfill their every wish and to serve them. Forcing me to sexual feelings was their way to come after 'me.'

Sadism, with its absolute need for both pain and total control, explains why our assailants used religion. Religious ritual, calls to 'higher' and 'greater' powers, prayers, and the trappings of institutional religious power are the sadists' means to not only hurt us as physical entities, but to hurt our capacity to define ourselves.

This is the goal of sadism: to destroy another's sense of self and to absolutely control another. Children have no economic, physical, developmental, or legal power, so sadists go after the child's inner unfolding. Children are so ultimately, and with any luck, so truly themselves. Sadistic and ritual abuse attempts to annihilate the only power children have.

By assessing the combination of sadistic torture and religious indoctrination, survivors of abuse can more fully explain the horrors of our childhoods. We have to speak out about the connections between sadistic torture and brainwashing by religious abusers. By understanding the connections between the sadism and religious indoctrination, we not only understand what we survived, but also find the understanding to speak out and safeguard future generations.

White Cult Anti-Semitic Ritual and the Blood Libel

Debby Earthdaughter

The cult that abused me was led by rich WASP men who were business leaders. It was a satanic and anti-Semitic cult, and white-skinned people of different social classes belonged. Since I am part Jewish, I was targeted for some 'special' stuff.

A memory. I am lying on the altar. Someone draws a Star of David on my forehead with blood. It marks me, and a mark made in blood is always there. Washing doesn't get it off. I don't know where the blood comes from. The cult usually killed rabbits or babies bred for sacrifice. The blood could also just come from cutting me or somebody else.

When did that happen? The worst times of year for me are the European pagan holidays (the eight points of the year). But the Passover and Easter period is also one of those very bad memory times, and birthdays are really loaded.

I know that something really bad happened to me in the cult at Passover. I don't know exactly what yet, but the marking memory may be part of it. The feelings it evokes are terror, shakiness, and an incredible heaviness.

Passover is a Jewish holiday in early spring. It is a celebration of freedom from slavery. Matzoh is an unleavened bread that is eaten during Passover.

During the Middle Ages in Europe, gentiles invented the myth of the 'blood libel,' the lie that Jews need the fresh blood of a child to make matzoh, and that they killed Christian children around Passover. Whenever a child was killed, molested, or disappeared, gentiles blamed Jews. This led to countless trials and executions. The blood libel was also used as an excuse for pogroms and even for killing all the Jews in a town. (See Caroline Arnold and Herschel Silverstein, *Anti-Semitism: A modern perspective*. Simon and Schuster, NY, NY, 1985.)

Knowing this makes me think that the myth of the blood libel is a reversal of what some white cults were really doing in the Middle Ages. When I say *reversal*, I am referring to something that is turned inside out to create a lie based on something else that is true. (I'm using the word in the same sense that Mary Daly did, in *Beyond God the Father: Toward a Philosophy of Women's Liberation*. Beacon Press, Boston, MA, 1973.) It might be a direct reversal, where the gentile cults killed Jewish children, or it might be a cover explanation for the disappearance of the Christian children that were killed by their own people.

It's so gross to remember things, and I still don't know everything that went on. Mostly I just have the feelings. But it's also a relief to know as much as I do and to think about the meaning. When I told a friend about connecting my experience to the blood libel, she said, "Yeah, that blood libel thing was too weird to come out of nowhere. It had to be just changing who was doing it."

I grew up knowing I was part Jewish, but our heritage wasn't talked about openly. My dad was gone, and I initially thought it was through him. He was never involved in the cult that I know of; it was my mom and her family. One time when my mother's father was drunk, he told me that although he had been raised Catholic, he also had Mormon, Blackfoot, and Jewish ancestors. Knowing that, it makes it even worse that he used my Jewish ancestry as an excuse to abuse me.

When I went away to college, I hadn't consciously remembered my abuse. I don't know if it was still going on or not, but I remember the feeling of being watched. I wanted to get away, and I was also afraid to. When I graduated, I went and worked on a kibbutz in Israel. It was a way to break with my family, by going far away physically and culturally. I'm very glad I did, for life opened up for me then in a lot of ways.

I've been thankful for Jewish friends who have shared some of their holidays, grateful for the spirituality and celebration that's just plain enjoyment. It's been very important to me to learn about Jewish culture and to speak out against anti-Semitism.

I don't identify as Jewish, because I didn't grow up in the culture, and I'm not sure what my ancestry really is. I don't want to try to escape dealing with what I was raised with. It's too tempting to say I'm Jewish, or to make a lot of a small unknown amount of Native heritage. I've heard the term 'big-toe Indian,' which is what some Native people call white people who make a big deal of a tiny amount of Native ancestry. About all that's Indian of

their ancestry would fit in their big toe. People who want to be Native want to be included, want to escape having to deal with white privilege. I've felt that the real work for me is to accept where I do come from, in terms of what my culture actually was when I was being raised.

Anti-racism work is part of breaking the cult cycle for me. If my grandfather hadn't hated his own Jewish heritage, he couldn't have abused me for being part Jewish. And if white anti-Semitism didn't exist, it couldn't have happened at all.

Where I'm currently living, my lover has been a target of anti-Semitism, and I've also gotten some shit for starting discussions of anti-Semitism. I wonder if this is part of what is keeping my cult-abuse memories down. I don't feel safe among people who do anti-Semitic things, even if not on a cult/ritual level.

Memories Are Made of This

George Gardiner

I am nearly sixty and I am only now beginning to see and understand the shape of my life. After seven years of therapy, I still can't remember the childhood abuse that I was evidently subjected to; who was involved; or, if it was a cult experience, what the ideology was. My therapist and others say that I have experienced memories and flashbacks, but they don't feel like memories or flashbacks to me, for they are emotionless. And yet, there is no doubt in my mind that I was severely abused as a child. Now I have enough bits and pieces to begin making sense of this apparent contradiction.

For almost fifty years, I believed that my upbringing had been ideal and that nothing untoward had happened to me. Yet I also remember feeling that I needed to marry so that I could escape. In hindsight, I can see how I protected myself from my family of origin by living in other cities and by having somebody with me whenever I visited. That is odd for somebody with an ideal childhood, but it is consistent with not remembering.

Other strange behaviors also suggest that my childhood was less than ideal. People tell me I started twitching around grade two after I had my appendix taken out. Over the following school years, I developed tics, grunts, wheezes, sniffing, snuffing, odd vocal noises, and compulsive movements. A psychiatrist said I would grow out of the twitching. I didn't, until I had completed seven years of therapy as an adult. I learned later that these are symptoms of Tourette's Syndrome.

I have some memories, but they are bits of things, like photographs. There are enough bits to create the illusion of real memories. My first bit memory of anal spasms is from around grade eleven. These spasms have occurred periodically throughout my life, usually accompanied by a feeling of something hard in my rectum. I always thought a bowel movement was needed but nothing ever came. The spasms often spread to the base of my erect

penis, and ejaculation caused the spasms to instantly dissipate. The spasms still come, but less frequently, and without the feeling of something hard that needs removing. Now, it is just pain.

I still have sexual dysfunctions that indicate trauma I haven't remembered. There was a time, before therapy, when the slightest sexual thought caused an instant erection, any time, anywhere. Sexual arousal quickly escalated into a frenzied need for release if I let it persist. Climax was never satisfying, and a momentary pause was always mandatory so that the pain of — something unremembered perhaps? — could be reduced. There were other times of near frigidity, when no amount of stimulation could produce relief, or even arousal.

In spite of my exaggerated sexual response to anything the least bit suggestive, it seems odd that I never had girl friends on the side or visited prostitutes. For a while, I simply thought I was very virtuous. The explanation probably has more to do with what I can't remember than with virtue.

My lack of memory, I have discovered, is not only from my growing-up years, but from my married life and business careers, too. Until I entered therapy, the world was a place that I didn't understand. I felt removed from it, as if there was a veil between me and everything else. Other people seemed to know how it worked, but I didn't.

I felt like I was living in a trance. You never would have guessed this, because I appeared to be very successful: two cars and a large house and fancy holidays. What people never saw was that I could only go so far in a profession before I had to switch careers, and that I had no friends, business or otherwise, only my wife and family. I can't relate to how most males think and what they find interesting. I am comfortable with females, and communicate with them much better than with men, but a married man chumming with women doesn't go over well in our society.

Whatever it is that I didn't remember left me with a vast emptiness; a gap between me on the outside and whatever was hidden inside. I have always been vaguely aware of how I wait for thoughts from inside.

Shortly after entering therapy, I read a tragic story in a Canadian newspaper about a homeless aborigine who was found dead in a ditch in the middle of winter after wandering aimlessly for days. Some months earlier, this man had saved the life of a police officer who had been taking him to jail. The newspaper described a person who was lost and couldn't figure out how to make life work. I was devastated when I read his story, because,

inside, I was that man. I have felt lost throughout my life and have wandered without purpose, compass, or understanding. Now that I had stopped to examine my life, I could feel the immensity of the emptiness that had always been there. But, why did I feel this way if my upbringing had been ideal?

I entered therapy because the diagnosis of Tourette's Syndrome just didn't sit right with me, and I wondered if my twitching could be psychological in origin. I was at a crisis point and couldn't maintain my illusions anymore. I needed answers. Now, after seven years of therapy, I am getting those answers, and more. My body is no longer filled with tension and the accompanying dull pain. I have connected with an inner knowingness and, for the first time, I feel that I am doing what I am supposed to be doing in life.

I have been extraordinarily lucky in getting to this point. I have had three different therapists, all supportive and all just what I needed at each stage of my process. I have learned something essential from each of these therapists, who served as stepping stones to what it is I can't yet remember.

Within six months of starting therapy, what was hidden in the depths of my being began to make itself known. My dreaming became so intense that for years I slept with only one cover because I got so hot. Then I started waking up with my abdomen contracting in painless spasms, as if I were trying to vomit. My abdomen and penis were unbearably tender to the touch. Touching either one of them triggered the contractions. For the next three years, even the pressure of a single cover was too much, and I had to sleep on my side.

Meanwhile, I lost the desire for any sexual activity and my need for real love and intimacy began to emerge, in all its aspects and without inappropriate sexuality getting in the way. Now, six years later, the dreaming is diminishing dramatically, since I am finally beginning to understand and accept the truth of what happened to me.

My first therapist taught me that the body always remembers the past, even when the mind can't. My twitching, body tension, sexual dysfunctions, and spasms have been a testament to that truth and a source of memories, however incomplete or poorly understood. She taught me exercises that release emotion and memory buried in the psyche, locked there by muscle tension.

Twice, while doing one of these exercises, I suddenly found myself naked in my crib looking at my little-boy genitals. The first

time, I saw an erect penis over my head. The second time, a woman's arm reached between my legs.

The anger-releasing exercises were less successful, and I couldn't go any further with the crib images. We both began to sense a wall that we would not be able penetrate. I could tell that my therapist was puzzled and frustrated that the exercises didn't work better for me.

My second therapist used conventional talk therapy. She taught me to discover and then honor my own therapeutic process. That insight was timely, because I was beginning to learn just how extraordinary my process is. The bodywork had prepared me for images and feelings that came when I relaxed and let go. Relaxing into the feeling of an anal spasm, for example, produced a violent reaction that included body-soaking perspiration and trying to protect my genitals. I could also reproduce some of my twitches by focusing on certain feelings, such as the sensation of choking whenever I wore a tie.

Focusing on a calm state brought into stark relief the distracting chatter that had always been in my head. With practice, I became increasingly able to put the chatter aside. Very disturbing images and feelings then emerged: coffins; a young me who sees from two perspectives within a church setting, as if split; symbols such as pentagram-like stars, a chalice, and demons; and feelings of momentary terror, nausea, and confusion. But these didn't seem to lead anywhere. They seemed to be stand-alone statements. Bits of things.

We could go only so far before we hit a wall. Many times the explicit image of a veil or a massive wall would appear as if to say, "There are some things that you are allowed to see only part of and others that you are not allowed to see at all."

That's when I started working with my third and present therapist, who has experience in hypnosis and ritual abuse. And that's when, in response to a question, I experienced a changing inside, and then a pushing-forward feeling. I heard my mouth say, "What am I doing here? I don't know anything!" My first alter had appeared. In hindsight, it wasn't the first, but it was the first to be so obvious.

(From my perspective, there is a lot of nonsense being spoken about hypnosis and the ability of therapists to implant memories. During my hypnosis sessions, a part of me never went into trance. This internal observer continuously ran an annoying and distracting commentary on what was going on.)

It soon became clear that there was another part of me with a very specific agenda, and that if I didn't follow that agenda, my mind would remain a blank. My sessions therefore consist of allowing inner parts to speak and recording what they have to say. This gives me three bangs for my therapeutic buck, so to speak. First, I get the experience of the actual session, then I get the session a second time while transcribing the recordings, and then a third time when I proofread the transcripts.

But, agenda notwithstanding, my progress came to another halt. Conventional talk therapy and hypnosis lost their effectiveness. What I came to call the Big Block became very visible. I could see that it had been present in different areas in my life since I was sixteen. Something key to our understanding of my process was still missing.

My dreams, though, continued to produce numerous images and messages about pedophiles, rituals, and multiplicity. To honor my process, I consulted a psychologist who was an expert in dream interpretation. This opened a huge door for me, because I learned how to work with dream imagery. But I needed to give his interpretations a small twist in order to make them work for me, and he needed to stay with conventional meanings.

He didn't appreciate my suggestions; he thought I should quit getting my social jollies from therapy, and he gave me a 'get on with your life' lecture. I got on with my life, took control, got rid of him, and concentrated on the dreams on my own.

Since starting therapy in June, 1990, I have recorded over four thousand dreams, and I have learned a lot about what the symbols mean. I don't consult books for meanings; I let the meaning evolve from the dream. Meaning is consistent over time and across characters. It is obvious that each dream is a piece of a larger puzzle, but the picture does not unfold linearly.

A coherent story emerges, for example, if I examine all of the dreams that involve one character in chronological order. Dreams that involve that same character along with another one tell a different story because of the changed perspective. I find dreams with more than two characters much harder to decipher because of the increased complexity.

The nature of my process is clear to me now. The part of me with the fixed agenda and the dreams points to the unbelievably awful truth hidden behind the Big Block. My therapist had mentioned the possibility that the Big Block was a product of programming, but, since I didn't come from a cult family, and the whole idea seemed a touch bizarre, I hadn't spent much time

worrying about it. I have substantial evidence of programming now, however.

A friend of mine found information about color programming on the Internet. To her amazement, the programming colors described her internal system exactly. That was especially interesting to me because some of my normally black and white dreams contain colors: red, yellow, green, a gorgeous blue-green, and brown. Each color appears in dreams that seem to be related to each other, just as each dream character appears in related dreams. White is the color of presenting parts and black belongs to cult-identified parts. I also have a series of green dreams about grass, shrubbery, and evergreen trees.

The real breakthrough came when I discovered literature on two other types of programming involving bizarre images of mine. Birds, reptiles, houses, streets, vehicles of all kinds, trees, castles, water, horses, aliens, spaceships, and cowboys—to mention a few—all had special meanings in these programming systems, and their program meanings fit the dream meanings that I had laboriously figured out. The alters that one of these systems described were the characters in my dreams. The fit was nearly perfect.

Since then, my dreaming has dropped off precipitously and has taken a new and darker turn, confirming that I am on the right path. I know that mind-control programming is the Big Block that hides the truth of my past. I never in my wildest imagination would have guessed that my mind had been tampered with. Who will ever believe this? I come from a respected family.

Being believed, being heard, has many facets. One aspect is believing in myself. Given the current social climate and the need of many people to discredit memory recovery, believing in myself is not easy. It wouldn't be easy even if abuse hadn't ruined my self-esteem. I have been very lucky with my choice of therapists, because they all believed in the integrity of my progress, even if they had difficulty at times believing what my process was producing. They all waited for my own sense of knowing to emerge and clarify what was being said about my hidden past.

My process has both prepared and protected me along the way. The dream messages come from an inner place that is beyond my conscious reach and control, a place I can't influence. What I am being told, therefore, is coming from an authentic core. My reality is that there are parts of me that tell me about other parts of me that have had a different life from mine. The messages have been

consistent and progressively detailed over a period of seven years. How could I not believe, given this kind of preparation?

The big picture has become clear to me. For a long time, images and messages were superficial. Feeling was largely absent, and many of the images were protective screen memories for the ugly events that they represented. As if confirming that I am on the right track, the chatter and the intruding voices have all but disappeared, and my dreaming is shifting to increasingly detailed, more concrete, and darker images.

It was also important that other people in my life believe me. At first, my experience was the same as other survivors; not many people took me seriously when I said I needed to stop working and get into therapy. An acquaintance of mine who was a medical doctor recited the standard 'get on with your life' speech once when we were at a restaurant. I cut the evening short and went home. I never heard from him again and never tried to contact him. Another man wondered about the wisdom of what I was doing, but added that I knew best. We are still in contact.

The unsupportiveness of friends and family is so common that someone gave it a name: Vanishing Friend Syndrome. The social ostracism that I experienced as a result of my twitching had left me with few friends and inured me to rejection. I didn't have high expectations of others to begin with. In a sense, I have been lucky in this regard.

Support from my family of origin has not been an issue. My mother died a few years before I entered therapy, and my father, while he was alive, knew nothing about my therapy, except that I sought help for my twitching. It is interesting to note that neither my sister nor I have visited their graves. I didn't even attend my father's funeral.

My sister's experience helped me to believe what happened to me. She started therapy at the same time I did, in a city one thousand miles away.

Like me, she has few childhood memories of our parents. Neither of us has any memory of the other around the house while growing up. Her therapist once asked her to draw a picture of her whole family. She drew a king and a mom. Her therapist asked her to put that picture in an envelope, put it away, and look at it later. A few years later, she was dumbfounded by the picture. Her dissociation made that experience possible.

My sister's process is different from mine in some ways. She wakes up every morning with a heavy sense of morbidity that persists and deepens if she doesn't get out of bed. She experiences

barely-submerged rage which she vents in a controlled way by using Kundalini yoga exercises. I have felt almost no anger during my process, and I don't expect to any time soon. Although I have been able to experience some sadness and grieving, unemotive dreams have dominated my process. Like me, my sister still remembers nothing of what produced the rage, the sadness, or the morbidity. She has the Big Block, too.

It is important for all survivors to find out what their process is and to honor it. This involves coming to believe what one's psyche is saying. Initially, the message may be highly metaphorical or incomplete and subject to misinterpretation, but the need to honor the process is basic if recovery is to be attained and the truth revealed. One needs a therapist who empowers the client to do their work. That means having enormous patience. That means having done their own work.

My therapist believes we all have an eternal core that evil can't touch. I have no other explanation for my process in general and my dreaming in particular. That explanation is consistent with the many survivors I have met who are fighting the evil that they have been subjected to. They are basically good people in spite of everything.

I believe that we are born connected to something universal and good, something incomprehensible. We are all born with knowledge of how we are supposed to live, and when that knowingness is lost due to cultural, religious, or evil influences, life becomes hell. My life had been chaotic, but with the help of my therapists, my inner knowingness is coming forward to heal me. A line about a bird from a poem by Hopkins is on business cards that I never got around to using: "What I do is me... for that I came."

These ideas are getting close to God stuff. But, I hate God; or at least the biblical version of God. There is too much evil in the world to believe in a heavenly father that watches over each sparrow that falls. He does not even seem to be concerned about what happens to children! Several little boys that were me didn't get to grow up, and the evil of the Big Block still prevents connection with them.

There is a flow to life, however, which can be mystical. I have experienced a bit of it: therapists with specific skills came into my life in the order I needed them; my second therapist's telephone advertisement literally leaped out at me when I was looking for someone in a city where I knew no one; information and seminars about mind control and programming appeared at exactly the right time.

I have always had a sense of needing to go somewhere, do something. I am in a calm place of knowing that I am now on that path, and my process is taking me to my life. In the first part of the TV series *The Power of Myth*, Bill Moyers asks Joseph Campbell about his Christian faith. "I don't have faith," he said. "I have experience." I am accumulating experience.

I believe that everyone who embarks upon an examination of their life, particularly those who have been traumatized by evil, can experience the same kinds of things I have. It's as if life has created an opening in this century when the potential for exposing evil has never been greater. Those who honor their healing processes have much to give the world.

My Birthday: A New Beginning

Nicky

even as i write palms feet smarting from remembered shock, the tingling quaking in my bones that tells me there is (d)anger trying to get out, the grief of two murdered babies swelling like an ocean of blood and love inside my stomach chest heart throat and womb, my womb which feels injured beyond repair.

dreams/waking visions last night of them coming to get me, fear i will be kidnapped and murdered today, images of certain lead figures ringing the doorbell holding sacred knives handing me a dead cat a black bible a note to kill myself written backwards of course marking the door with an inverted crucifix in blood, their favorite sign. this is real. i feel the edge of metallic fear and hard, blunt truth, weapon they fashioned for me to carry inside, the lead weight of knowledge. this is real is real is real the rallying cry from inside, do not discount it as fantasy, dreams, hallucination. this is precise and factual, each element of your fear has a root in the earth, the solid earth of this reality. **IT HAPPENS. IT HAS HAPPENED.**

this was meant to be a poem a joyful poem of life and celebration, of forgiveness.

blood blood blood turn it to sand to sea to water
blue and cool and wet and cleansing
washing my inside with my inside mind
give it all back, give the hurt and horror back
say they do not belong to me, i am not them
i am clean and my body and soul are green and vivid as life
i will not carry this ugliness further. i will leave it on the rocks for the sea to carry away, dissolve; for the wind to blow it broadcast it scatter it

i am not my mother's keeper, i am not my father's keeper
i am not the guardian of their secrets horror and shame
i do not want this knowledge this role this responsibility

i do not want to serve worship obey any god but my own
i do not belong i do not belong to anything anyone anywhere
but to myself to the earth

i do not want this knife this sword

i do not want power over anyone or anything

i want my own power from the inside out

i do not want to save him, i want him to save himself

i do not want this calendar of death and destruction,
of domination

i do not want this heritage of hate destruction and shame

i want to turn this inheritance around

i forgive myself for staying alive

i forgive myself for staying alive

i forgive myself for doing what it takes to stay alive

i forgive myself for being hurt

i forgive my body for its wounds, visible and invisible

i forgive my body for responding sexually

i honor my tiredness, i honor my need to give up

i forgive myself for needing to eat

i forgive myself for needing to sleep

i forgive my body for conceiving and giving birth

i forgive myself for giving each child away

i forgive myself for taking my child's life before he was taken
from me

i forgive myself for holding and using the knife when i was
forced to do so

i honor my right to survive

i welcome every part of my being into this world, known or
unknown, no matter how hostile, damaged, ashamed, vengeful,
angry, terrified, hopeless, or shut down. i welcome every single part
that belongs to the cult into the wholeness of this being, every
single part that feels he/she/it has done wrong, that we can know

each other at last and find ways of honoring each other and acknowledging our bond, that we may fully experience this lifetime, this living body in which we are housed, protect and honor it, for our common good and for the good of the world, human animal and natural, of which we are a living part.

i welcome the good and the bad, that they may at last join hands and become the complex whole that is reality. i open up to the possibility that love may exist along with hate, that good memories and experiences can exist along with terrifying awful ones, that very different parts can co-exist and communicate without destruction and without canceling each other out, that this world is big enough to contain all the love and hurt i have ever experienced, and more.

i am shaped by my inheritance like the coast is shaped by the sea that breaks on it, but i am not it. i carry the imprint of my experiences in every cell of my being, but i am not them. i am the rock the flesh that resists, that assumes its own shape and nature.

i am alive today and this is the first birthday on which i am conscious and present in my entirety, having reached the true source of my pain and unmasked it. from this day on i belong to myself, all of us to each other, and that is where the growing and the healing starts.

Brother of Mine

Robin and Amboosh Anm  

Stowhanway, brother of mine with the golden heart and golden skin, you teach me a language of love and the feelings of warmth to go with the sounds. You were raised with respect and honoring. It is all you know how to feel and give. I'm sorry the captors stole you with lies and money. They bring you here into this world of hell and violence; the only place I've ever known. I am not sorry I love you. I hold on to you like the bit of nourishment I have been starving for over years. You hold me as the only bit of humanness now in this strange place.

We will run away from here together, and I will follow you back to your home. There we will be fed a whole meal that we can taste because we are not numb with fear. You will be welcomed back, and I, with my light skin and collapsed soul, will be welcomed in.

In our secret whispers before the torture, you tell me the details of this saving land. The keepers do not know that while they violate my skin with metal and fire, my spirit has taken a journey with you. You tell me, Illaway, free in your heart. While they can imprison our bodies, they can never contain our hearts. They can never stop us from loving each other. Never. Not even if they kill you, or me.

Your hands are the most beautiful I have ever seen. They hold love not hate. I am almost afraid to touch them. They are so clean and perfect. I fear the bitterness will pour out of me into you. That would be putting acrid salt into a life-filled pond. I want for you to be free, you do not know how to be caged. You do not know how to die inside. I try to teach you how to die to be safe, and you try to teach me how to love to be alive. We both learn.

Stowhanway, brother of mine, let's run away from here. Even the plan, the mentioning of it, is hope. I have not dared to hope since I was born. Something as bright as hope will be noticed and taken away. In your trustingness you wear jewels in the presence of thieves. But I love to see you shine in all that darkness. It is such

a mockery of them. Just that you can smile makes them look like fools.

Is it eleven or twelve times that we have run away? Sometimes we plan enough to have food that I have stolen stuffed in our pockets. You do not know how to steal, you only know how to ask. Other times, I see that look in your eyes of pain, brimming over that you might die. I pull you away, knowing we will be found and brought back, but that the one night in the wet leaves is better than the rest of our existence in this coldness.

How can I know how that horror hit your open heart? I just cannot teach you the thousand ways I developed to hide in between the sounds, under the levels of the screams. I can be so tiny I can hide in my own cells, or so fast I will just be the glint on the knife. How can I teach your spirit to be small? I have taught myself how to not breathe for however long they suffocate. I have learned how not to care for however long they hate. I am the master of survival. You can only be a student of being fully alive.

It has to be now to run away. I can see it in your eyes. This time when they forced your body, they lacerated your spirit. I take your hand and pull you away in the second that no one is looking. I think they let us go now because they enjoy the hunt to come find us.

This time we have to make it to your home. I'll do anything because I can see your wounds are beyond what I can heal. Maybe your family will know how to help. I'll do anything, even if I die of exhaustion when we arrive at the door. I will not stand by and let the most beautiful creature I have ever seen just fade away. I tell you, *Illaway*, remember, *Illaway*. *Ton tom a yast to ahi ha way*. Everything about love you have ever taught me, I feed it back to you. *Ti nast iem yen*.

I'm a malnourished twelve year old girl, and I can't carry your fifteen year old body. I will try and carry your spirit. *Illaway*. *Illaway!* Never let them touch your soul, it is only your body they can touch. Stowhanway my brother, we must keep running. You can't lay down. *Dondu tas an may a lin*. Please my brother, I love you. Don't stop here. I will run inside myself and gather all the strength I've hidden and give it to you. But just like I can find no way to get my blood into your body, I can only tell you, *Son nosh*. Never give up. I love you please, please get up. *Allon di*. I tell you how beautiful it will be when we get there. Don't leave without me, Stowhanway. I try and lift you. You are heavier and more exhausted than I have ever felt. Please get up.

Okay, we will rest here awhile. I sit down and stroke your head, scan the land to see if they are out for the hunt yet. I whisper, *Sho*

me ay be an dost. Receive from the earth the strength you need. I give all the love I have. I'm desperate at this moment that it is just the amount that you have shown me, and that has gotten depleted to spread out and fill a hollow me. *Be an soud de alway.* I describe your soft bed and kind mother that I have made a picture of in my mind. All my thoughts are in how I'm going to get us there. I am too full of worry to enjoy the possibility that she will become my mother.

I lay down next to you. *Sho ton be ya est.* Your skin is brown like the earth, and the blood drops mixing with the soil are as dark as my despair. *Son su mayan.* I'm telling you all the stories you have ever told me, laced with all the hope I can pull from the sky. Just like you taught me. I'm listening to all the sounds of life. I can hear the moon, and listen to the life of the wind. You taught me wind is alive, that it carries souls and wisdom. I can hear that your breathing is very small. I start breathing for both of us, my heart is pounding twice as loud. I hold you that much tighter.

The wind blows hard and I cover you with my body to protect you. You are not fighting any more, and the wind comes inside and takes you. I desperately grab hold, but you also taught me only a fool tries to grab hold of the wind. Like never before I feel it rush through me, not cold, but filled with warmth. It is a pain and a joy that I will never feel again. It is a moment that needs no words because you are inside my being, and you can see how much I love you. You know how much I love you, and I feel how much you love me.

The wind carries souls and wisdom and it is alive.

Ancient History

T. S.

"Touch me here. No, don't touch me at all."

Gently, I would have to lead her past this block of pain, away from her trembling body, in the memory she was living. My arms, themselves too frail to fight off the tormentors, we would be left lying, afraid together, shivering in the suffocating cloud of this pain.

"Leave me alone. Don't ever leave me."

"How could I?" I would think, crying and overwhelmed by feelings of emotional inadequacy. Then, when she pulled me close to feel the anguish within her, the burning anguish of her charred skin, I grew frightened, because I knew soon she would close her eyes, close her body, close herself off from me. But I also knew that she needed me to witness this, to endure this for her, since I alone existed as proof of her pain.

You don't understand. But being a woman, I imagined that I could, if only just, understand. Thus, in my arrogance, I imagined my own body, its openings, its crevices explored with objects I couldn't see, couldn't understand, couldn't define in my dreamy girl-child mind. I saw her/my body mutilated for years on end, to no end. To the end, then even further. Red-hot fire, she/I screamed in anguish. Red blood fire on me, around me, in me. Suddenly I would come out of my trance to realize she was choking. She could not breathe. I could not help her.

I never told her these imaginings. She would have felt insulted by my offerings of understanding. She would have lashed out, hated me in desperation to make me understand that I couldn't understand. That she could try to make me understand, but that I never could.

Trapped.

More than her anger, I feared her silence. She offered it to me as a challenge. I must try to make her speak, make her cry, make her let it all out. Out of love, I tried. I labored; I grieved for her, for

my failure. She sat, triumphant, confusing me with her bitter smiles, her eyes mocking me, relishing the power she possessed at the moment.

“Tie me up, but don’t hurt me.”

“Tie me up. Hurt me.”

I, afraid, would at first merely comply, her eagerness frightening me, large in the face of my unease. Her desperate need spurred me on, causing my unease to crumble. Her empty gaze and frenzied movements inspiring excitement within me, and this frightened me. Myself, out of control, I hear only syllables of what she says. I hear only the edges of her pronouncements that I am hurting her, that I should stop. Words delivered in a fogged haze of pain versus pleasure. Confused by her pleasure, I inhale the innocent compliance of her voice, laced with pleading, laced with honest pleasure, impossible to understand, impossible to contain.

These shared rememberings of the past brought me closer to her, or so I thought. Often, I realized that I was close to losing everything; that I was like her, like them, and that as lost as we both were in this circle of abuse, I had to find the beginning. Spiraling around in this desperate drive for pleasure, control, release, I had to fish us both out, unhooking this frantic hold.

Dragging her spirit, kicking, crying, we entered therapy together. We struggled. We submerged all that enfolded the two of us into destroying, uncreating, the trap of self-loathing, the trap of love me/love me not. We dove into the confusion, hoping that somewhere there existed a catharsis of this pain.

Pain. Let me describe the pain. The unending pain of watching her sleep amongst the coven of her childhood-hooded nightmares, trapping her into a man-made circle, strangers and family who fold her into a tight package to play with, to pull apart, to glue back together, in order to pull apart again and again.

Pain. Let me describe the pain. The torturous pain of letting her beat her fists against my back as she called out the names, long forgotten, never forgotten. Hammering these names, her suffering, into my back. Stamping history on my skin, to leave this reality unerased. During the day she recounted history in the ancient oral tradition, and by night, she dug her fingers into her body, trailing blood along my back, spelling the names, spelling the pain.

And pain,
and pain,
stretching, beating, pulling, cutting, screaming, hammering,

slapping, crying, burning, tearing,
Pain.

She survived, After all this, she still survived. I am awed by her strength. I often awaken crying, my spirit still reeling from the burden of her pain, and she, she walks forward, stronger now, lighter now. I rejoice for her, quietly, on my own, she having long since left me, putting together a new life for herself. A new, happier life. And I, finally seeing all that I had never seen when I was too close to her to see it, congratulate her with my war-torn, memory-soaked tears.

I celebrate her survival.

The Invisible Boy

Jonny D.

I've always been invisible
no one can see me
no one wants to see me
covered in filth
standing naked
bleeding
cold
repulsive
disgusting

Horrid little boy who let them do all of those things to him and
didn't die like billy died and didn't fight and save him either and let
them do it and should have died but didn't and now he has to go to
hell and burn cause he didn't die when he should have and now we
don't really have a spirit no more cause they took it all away and
all we are is an empty shell and there's nothing inside us so we are
invisible and that's why nobody sees us and that's why nobody
wants to talk to us cause we are really no good and they know it and
we just aren't here really anyway

and daddy held me over the cliff and the waves were loud
and the rocks were black
and the fog
was so cold
and i was so scared
and he said if we tell
if i tell we fall
and i never told
and i should have
and i should have died
and i should have fought

but i was only eight
and i was too little
and runner ran
and they caught him anyway
and we bled for that
and rock closed the door and we hid inside till it all went away
but now we are invisible again
and they took away our spirit and now we are empty and invisible
but if anybody can see us can you tell us how to get our spirit back?

Letter To All Survivors

Lestat

This is a letter to all ritual abuse survivors — to those who are surviving and to those who did not. They died not because they lacked strength, but because their hearts were so broken, their gossamer wings torn, their childhoods stolen, their lives ripped away from them, and because no one dared to listen, no one believed, and no one dared to speak the truth.

Dear Ritual Abuse Survivor:

I write this letter to you because I hurt, too. I believe you. You are not crazy, and you have the right to be safe and to demand a voice. I understand your terror, your engulfing and overwhelming pain, and your never-ending struggle.

What the cult has done/is doing to you is horrible, violent, and terrifying. You had/have no choice and are not responsible in any way for what they did/are doing to you.

I understand your bloodied, crumpled hurt and loneliness. I understand your silence. I understand those nights when you sit, huddled in bed, and rock back and forth while the tears run down your face. And I also understand when your pain doesn't allow you to show any emotion, ever.

I understand when your friends and lovers are so gripped in their own fear of what they don't understand that they stop talking. They avoid eye contact with you, and they can't (and very often refuse to) acknowledge your pain.

I understand when transition houses won't take you in because they say you are dangerous, violent, or psychotic. I understand when battered women's shelters explain that they only are concerned with domestic violence, not stalking or group attacks. I understand when therapists question the validity of your experience or attempt to use you as an experiment or case study in multiplicity.

I understand when feminist rape crisis centers and women's centers don't consider what happened/is happening to you as 'violence against women' or as a part of the 'feminist agenda,' or when you ask for acknowledgment and a tiny inch of space they tell you in that condescending, mind-fucking tone that makes your five-year-old angry, sadistic alters clench their fists, that —

"Violence against women is on a continuum, all women have experienced violence."

"Ritual abuse is different. We don't have the knowledge to deal with it."

And when you spend your pearl-precious time trying to educate them, they criticize and discredit you.

I, too, have experienced the pain and rage of trying to align with the women's movement, fighting on the front lines, supporting, listening, raging, only to have our experience — yours and mine — completely denied, disbelieved, ridiculed, ignored. Because they are so afraid to break the silence, they make you the scapegoat for their shit; they project; they are afraid to give some of their own little space (or big space) so that you can speak. I write to tell you that this is not real feminism — don't believe it.

Unfortunately, the response (or lack of one) I have experienced is not that different from the one you and I have received from the rest of society. The society that condones, encourages, promotes, and takes part in the ritualistic, spiritual, sexual, physical, and emotional abuse and murder of children.

I understand when your pain only enables you to sit in front of the TV for hours. I understand when your pain enables you to do sometimes more and often less. I understand when you drink and drug yourself into oblivion, when you stuff your mouth full of food, hoping to fill up all the hollow and lonely people inside of you.

I understand when slicing the tips of your fingers, slashing your forearms, burning the soles of your feet helps release the sticky, dark ooze of pain and fear that relentlessly threatens to choke you.

I understand when memories bombard you and threaten to send you over that thin line between 'sane' and 'crazy.'

I understand when cult harassment gets so fucking bad that your choices (which aren't really choices at all) are to go back or kill yourself.

I write this so that you know you are not the only one. There are thousands and thousands of survivors who live with the same pain and terror you do.

Know that I think of you often and that I care. Know that you are incredibly courageous and beautiful. Know that I am fighting for you as well as for myself. Know that I will not keep silent when you have to. I will fight hard to keep society from shutting you up and denying your reality. I will need to rest often, but I will never give up on you.

Remember that every flashback, every memory, is a step closer to wholeness. They didn't count on you getting out and remembering.

I think of you, your strength and your beauty.

Lestat
(a survivor in healing)

Double Negatives

g & c

The room is big and dark. It would be dark no matter what, because it's a basement, but the red and black cloths hung in drapes along the walls make it even darker. The candles are red and black, too, and the way they get bright, then dark, makes the walls seem to move like we're inside a heart.

I feel cold, even under the heavy robe and with so many bodies pressing around me. I try not to look at the faces. I sense them, though, and out of the edges of my eyes they look like wide, pale moons floating in tangles of black cloth.

There are enough people tonight that I can get away with standing outside the pentagram. Its circle is big, and painted red against the black floor. The points of the star inside touch the circle in five sharp, precise triangles. Underneath, the floor is cold and bumpy-smooth, painted-over cement. I look down and see just the tops of my feet sticking out from under the robe. My toes look like pale brown nuts in the half-light from the candles. I imagine them folding under, and then my feet, too, and I do this with all my parts until I feel myself settled into an accordion pack of cards, tight and compact in that safe spot behind my breastbone.

Ahead of me, on the other side of the circle, is the altar. It's made of big blocks of cement made to look like stone, and I think of pictures I've seen in National Geographic.

When the chanting starts, I fold myself a little tighter. They're saying the lord's prayer backwards, and the way the sounds fall and rise reminds me of the ocean, how the water pushes over the sand, then back.

Inside, I start to say it frontwards, but then I worry that somehow this could get me into trouble, that either the devil will notice I'm not following the rules, or God will notice and get mad at me for being here in the first place. So instead I make my mind empty, and stretch it into a thin line of static.

"So mote it be. Hail satan!"

Everything is quiet for a long, electric beat, and then the voice comes deep and clear from behind the hairy mask. "Bring on the child."

I try not to look, but I see her anyway. She is small between the two priestesses, and her nakedness is white against their black robes. She walks slowly, her hands flopping loosely, and under the stringy butter-colored hair her face is full of a heavy dullness. She doesn't look to either side, and her body is limp as they lift her up.

One of the priestesses steps back, and the other moves forward, pushing her hood from her face and letting it fall to her shoulders. I know before I see her face that it's Rae. I knew when they lifted the girl, when their sleeves rustled back and I could see Rae's arms, thin and brown, and the unmistakable tracks streaking red and sore along the softest part.

It used to be that my heart would squeeze tight for the beat or two it took to see which one was Rae. Now I just want to close my eyes, or look away. I don't want to watch Rae's hands arranging the girl's quiet arms and legs, her fingers touching brown and sure against the bright-white skin with a gentleness they've never had against mine.

I don't want to watch Rae at all. It doesn't matter that she always says she's not my mother, or that for so long I believed her: when I look in mirrors I recognize her face in mine. I'm lighter, it's true, and younger, but my face each year looks more and more like hers, and sometimes I can even feel her questions and crazies moving behind my own eyes.

I don't want to watch her now and know that her blood runs in me, that being her daughter means someday I'm supposed to stand where she stands now, that a daughter of mine is supposed to watch me. But here, it's against the rules to look away. I pull my invisible wire of static in onto itself until I am a tiny pinprick of light, something shining and numb, and this, too, I tuck behind my heart.

The leaving is sudden. It's a different night, a different child, a different year. Something knocks loose inside, rattles hard to the bottom of me. It leaves a hole, and I see, just for a moment, what we're doing, the ugliness of what they're teaching me to do. I expect the numbness to come, to plug up the peephole. But it doesn't. Inside I feel all of me twisting, turning, shrinking, then reaching and stretching, pushing, pushing, and suddenly I am through that tiny gap and stepping back, knocking my spine against the hard, thick wall that has held me all this time.

One, two, three rough breaths, a step back with each one, then I'm turning and I'm running, crying, running. I run up the cold cement steps, feeling along the bumpy wall. My robe pulls my legs. I lift it, hold it bunched in my fists, not caring what I show, push through the metal doors and wait, half a breath, for the biggest, darkest hand to tangle claws in my hair and yank me back.

The street is quiet, and I don't look behind me. I'm afraid of what I'll see there, that looking back will mean going back. The door makes a quiet groaning sound swinging shut, then a little click as it locks. It's done, I think. I'm locked out. I can't go back.

I run.

It isn't far to Afiya's house, but crying and running is hard. When I get there a hard band has wrapped tight around my chest. I pull at the door, push, pull, again, again, and then it opens sharply inward and Afiya stands, dark brown and braided, holding a dishtowel, red and white stripes. I think of blood.

"Child?" she says. There is irritation and worry in her voice. "I thought you and Rae— are you okay? What's wrong?"

I push my way around her, to the bathroom. My hip bangs against a table, then my shoulder sharp off the door frame, but I don't feel anything, really, just heavy and full and caving-in on myself, or maybe caving-out.

"I'm sick," I say and it's true. The sky-blue toilet stretches up and I am bending, heaving, pushing everything out, everywhere. Spring cleaning, I think, with a high laughing-choking, and I feel myself rocking at the sharp edge of a crazy all my own.

I push back, finally, thump hard with my backbone into the wall. My knees fall open to either side. The robe is heavy and slick and hot and I realize that I have messed myself, too. My smells are so strong and pressing that I feel I'll do it all again. But there's nothing left inside and the heaving rips through me, empty, purposeless.

Afiya stands in the doorway. Behind her stretches the dim hall, with shadows of real-house furniture, and further down, the warm light from the kitchen. I hear the radio playing there, rhythm and blues: Afiya had been humming, doing dishes.

I look up. She seems tall to me, though I know she's not much bigger than I am. Her face is open and worried, with tight spots at the edges of her eyes.

"I'm sorry," I say.

"Can you stand up?" She holds the dishtowel tightly in front of her, over her heart, with two hands, twisting and untwisting.

I use the edge of the bathtub to push myself standing. The robe slaps wet across my shins, warm, still, but cooling. A shivering crawls up my thighs and then I am shaking, everywhere, even inside my bones, it seems, and it feels like my head might unhook and float away. A black prickling edges into my eyes, then back. I tingle. I look down at the mess I have made, then up again at Afiya, through a blurriness that can only be tears.

She comes forward and puts a hand out, brown palm toward my forehead. But I'm too sluggish to stifle the reflex of silent, sudden hardening that I have learned from Rae and others before her. Afiya pulls her hand back, quickly, pressing her lips tight, then holds out the little towel. She moves slowly, cautiously, as if she's offering meat to a hurt animal that might be rabid, might bite.

I take the cloth and wipe it hard against my mouth. It's rough and damp and has a dirty-dishes smell that almost starts me retching again. I wrap a hard, invisible wire around my belly, will it to stop.

"I'm sorry," I say again. "I'll clean it up."

"Don't be stupid. Get that thing off and take a shower. It's no big deal."

I put the dishtowel in the sink, and again I think of tiny rivers of blood. Afiya stands just outside the edge of my mess and watches me.

I can't lift the robe over my head while I'm standing, so I lean my shoulders back against the wall, slide it up to my waist, then sit on the edge of the tub and rest. I slip a little. The porcelain is hard and cool and slick beneath my wetness. I lean forward and pull the coarse cloth over my head, drop it to the floor. It leaves a chilly, wet trail up my back and in my hair, and I think of the garden slugs that always make Afiya's face get what she calls a 'heebie-jeebies' look. I look up and see it there now.

"I'm sorry," I say again.

Afiya's face changes and I see a mix of hard and soft in her eyes.

"Shut the fuck up and get in the shower, will you? You're sick, right? Don't be a goddamned martyr; it won't get any points with me."

I'm glad for her roughness; it's like a hard branch to lean against. I turn, slowly, lift my legs, set my feet in the tub. I'm still shaking and I wonder if I'll rattle into a thousand hard pieces, clicking against the porcelain and down the drain. My feet are light brown against the pale blue, and ugly with clumps of all that I've emptied myself of. I breathe in, deep, and it's sour and hot.

I lean forward and spit, then turn the water on, cold. It splashes and gurgles out of the spout and over my feet. The sound reminds me of something from Before, of laughing and water. I let myself slide down the side of the tub and then lean my head back against the wall.

Afiya steps back, turns, the beads on her braids clicking quietly.

"You'll be okay?"

I nod. She leaves.

I pull the curtain shut, bend forward, pull up the little chrome knob. There's a moment of clanking, and for just an eyelink I remember something else from Before, hiding from Rae under the kitchen sink, afraid of the pipe snakes. A prickling starts between my shoulder blades and twirls down my spine. Then the water is slapping hard and cold against me, and I drop my head between my knees and let it wash over. I realize in a far away inside-spot that I haven't thought about things from Before in a long time; that I've been so cold and numb inside that I haven't really thought any of my own thoughts at all. I let the hot water behind my eyes and nose spill out, and the cold water washes it away. I start getting goose bumps, but inside I feel something warm and golden beginning to unspiral, spreading up my neck and down through all of me.

I can't see through the dark-blue shower curtain, but I hear when Afiya comes back. She clanks and flushes. The water pressure in the shower changes every now and then, and I remember another thing from Before: a long-ago time with Rae, one of the good times, standing and letting the ocean push back and forth around our legs.

I breathe in, deep, and it still tastes bad, but there is a new, clean feeling with each pushing-out. I stand up after a while. The lightness in my head comes back, but the shaking has stilled and I feel all my parts newly connected, inside and out. The hard band winding around my chest eases and I push my face up into the water and sputter and breathe. I want the water to go everywhere, over and through me. I open my mouth and gargle and spit, and then drink in new, clear, coldness. I untangle my hair with my fingers and let the water smooth away the hot stink from my scalp.

I even open my legs, and pull myself as apart as I can, hoping that the cleanliness might reach up inside, to the dirtiest parts. I don't want soap, just the cold, clear rushing. I run it hard between my fingers, under my nails, between my toes, behind my knees, under my arms. A few thin, soft-black hairs have grown there, and between my legs, too; and I realize I'm growing up; I'm not a little

girl any more. I started my bleeding young, two years ago, when I was ten. Now I am taller than Rae, almost a grown-up. And suddenly comes a forgotten knowledge, huge and thick and welling up inside, pushing hard, hard against the hard band around my ribs: Grown-ups can do whatever they want!

This remembering stuns me, and my arms flop hard to my sides, the new, tentative hairs forgotten. The water pushes over me like singing and I forget to breathe. I look down at myself, hold out my hands, and I see that my bones are thicker than Rae's, that I am sturdier, stronger. I realize, suddenly, that I am grown-up enough to fight back.

The new warmth inside sparks and flares hot. It pushes all my air out and rushes alive through every part, filling all of me and forcing everything out. Then I'm gasping and I finally feel it: a wide, glittering cleanliness through and through, in even the dirtiest parts, with only that steel around my ribs holding the fire in.

When I get out, the bathroom's clean again, and the robe's gone. It's as if I've just taken any old shower. But I've never felt this way, pure, hollowed out, powerful.

Afiya has closed the door and left two dark-blue towels for me, folded on the toilet seat. I put up my hair, turban-style, like Rae does, and use the other towel to dry off. I rub hard, until I am pink-brown. The rubbing makes a warm tingling that seems magic to me. I turn and look for a while into the long mirror on the back of the door. I'm thin and long and light brown and knobby, and I look top-heavy with the towel on my head. I lean my head to the side and feel I might tip, so I shake it off and let it pile with the other on the floor.

When I press my palms along my chest, I feel two tiny swellings, only the merest hints. I wonder, for a second, if the hard, invisible wrap I feel there now will keep me from growing. It doesn't matter, I decide. I have seen Rae's tight, compact nakedness, and, in that way, I've always hoped to be like her.

I look at myself in the mirror, and because of this new, clean, strong feeling, I like what I see.

I hang one towel on the bar, wrap the other around me, brush my teeth, gargle with Afiya's mouthwash for a long time. Then at last I can pull in clean air, cool and minty and free of that stale, sour taste.

I go out into the hall. Afiya sits in the living room watching TV. The television shows an old black-and-white movie; it's very late. There's a window behind her; through the crack where the curtains

don't quite meet I see that outside is black-dark. I stand for a moment, until Afiya looks up.

"You okay?" she asks.

"Yeah. Thanks."

She moves her hand like she's brushing away smoke.

"You want tea or something?"

"No thanks. I'll wait till morning." My stomach rolls gently at the idea of having anything inside.

"All right then. See you in the morning."

As I walk down the hall to the bedroom that's been mine, I hear her turn off the TV and go into the room she shares with Rae. She leaves the light on in the living room for when Rae gets back.

In my room, I pull the curtains shut across the open window, turn on the light, let the towel fall. I like having a room, a big solid place that doesn't move. I like having a bed, and a dresser, even though there's not much in it. On top are the little silver-stud earrings I've had longer than anything; Rae says they pierced my ears with them when I wasn't even a year old. I always take them off before meetings. I put them back in now, and for a few seconds they are cool against me.

Then there's the tiny medicine bag, on a thin leather strap, that Gramma-kan had made when I started my bleeding, forever long ago at LaRue's. I loop it over my head and it is soft and comforting against my breastbone. I slide the top drawer out and feel around for my watch. After I put it on (it's two o'clock), I stand for a long moment in front of the dresser. I like the feel of the quiet air pushing in through the window and over my bare skin.

I try not to think of what I have done, about the trouble I'll be in. Leaving a meeting isn't allowed. I make myself quiet the familiar threats that knock gently against the hard, inside-part of my head. But I know the bigness of my disobedience. Will it matter that Rae is one of the highest priestesses? Will it matter that I'm being trained to be one, too? Or does punishment go equally to everyone, or maybe worse to the trusted ones who have broken the rules? I push the questions away, and think about how we can escape, even though they've said it's impossible. I wonder if I should start packing, if Rae would be able to make herself leave.

Then I hear it, the hard slam of the door, and she's in the living room, yelling.

"Where the fuck are you? Get out here. Now!"

I look down at the drawer, push it shut. Suddenly that feeling of strength is gone, and I'm only hollow and scared. Her voice has

the ice-sound: hard, cold, splintering, and I'm frozen, caught in the headlights, like a deer.

Something crashes and she yells again. "Now!"

The crash loosens me and I go to the living room, fast. The band around my breathing cinches so tight that I can pull in only shallow, useless air.

She stands, waits, watches me walk toward her.

She's not wearing the robe, of course. You're not supposed to go through the streets in it like I have done. The overnight bag that contains it is what she's thrown to make the crashing sound; it lies on the floor next to a fallen lamp. Rae doesn't look like a priestess. She's dark and beautiful, as always, too thin now, but she looks like just a regular person, like just anybody you'd pass on the street. She wears old Levi's and a faded gray sweatshirt and dirty-white sneakers. Her hair is twisting loose from the tight braid, and damp strands curl against her neck. Always after a meeting I feel a strange overlapping. I look at her and wonder how she goes between the two worlds; how she was there tonight, in the red-black basement, robed, chanting, bloody, and is here now, in Afiya's solid, carpeted living room, wearing old jeans and a sweatshirt that's wearing through in the sleeves.

I've never seen her this angry. It seems she's coiled all of her into the tightest she can be and is ready to spring, explode. Her breath goes in and out, hard, fast. Her hands (smaller than mine, I remember suddenly) fist and unfist at her thighs.

Afiya opens the door, puts one foot out. "Rae," she says.

Rae turns, fast, to face her. Her voice is so quiet I almost don't hear.

"You'll stay out of this, Afiya, if you know what's good for you." I see in Afiya's face that she's feeling the same shrinking-in as I am, and that this is her first time in the glare of the headlights. She pulls back, shuts the door.

But in those few moments, when her glare wasn't directed at me, my steel band had cracked the tiniest bit, and now I feel the beginnings of something molten bubbling behind my sternum.

Rae turns back, slowly this time. I imagine for a moment that her vision has cross-hairs, and then she's looking into me, in my eyes, burning, furious.

"You crazy stupid fuck. What the hell is wrong with you? Are you crazy? You think you can just walk away?" Her voice rises slightly from its evenness.

The bubbling inside me expands, presses, then finally erupts, hot, rocketing through to even my fingers and toes. For the first

time in my life I match my voice to hers and meet her eyes with fire of my own.

"Me? What's wrong with me? I'm the one who's not crazy. What's wrong with you? With all of you! You're the crazy ones. Do you think you can get away with it, over and over and over? Don't you know what you're doing?"

Something in Rae pulls back — frightened? And there's puzzlement behind her fury. I look at her, remembering I'm bigger, look down at her scarred arms, the tracks disappearing up under the folds of the sweatshirt she has pushed up to her elbows. She's so thin it seems she could snap. Her eyes sink far back and her hair is no longer shiny, but dull, brittle, thinning.

"Look at you, Rae; you're killing yourself. It's eating you alive! The *scag*, the church, all of it. Go look at yourself. Look at your arms, your face, all of you, go look!" I point to the bathroom.

Rae's eyes get skinny, and the puzzlement and fear leave, as if she's sized me up and decided I'm no match for her. And suddenly in me there's a new, burning feeling. I want to fight her, prove I am a match for her, hurt her, make her feel some of what I've felt.

She clenches her fists tight and hisses at me.

"Don't you dare tell me how to run my life."

"It's not just your life, it's my life, too. And I can't do this anymore. I can't do those things. It's making me crazy and I won't do it anymore. I won't. I won't." And then pushing up and out of me is that sharp, sharpest urge to wound. "I won't," I say soft. "I won't end up just like you."

It works. I see something in her recoil, see her pull air sharply in. Then she's yelling, grabbing things and throwing them at me.

"Shit, fuck, piss, damn, son of a prick! How dare you judge me? Mindless motherless cuntless shitlicking cocksucking son of a fucking prick. You don't like it? Then leave. I never wanted you in my life in the first place. I never asked for you to come into my life. Rammed into me, satan seed, they said, conceived of the High Grand Climax da Muer. The fifth mother! Don't want to end up like me? You arrogant little shitbag."

I close my ears to this, pretend it is part of her craziness.

"You're nothing to me, you hear that?" She's screaming. "Nothing! I've hated you since the minute you were born. Since before! But I couldn't give them another one. Another baby? Child? I couldn't. And I ran away. I had to leave, because of you! All these years you've been nothing but a ball and chain. Moping around, Ms. 'I've been so traumatized.' Ms. 'Holier than thou.' You don't know

how lucky you've been. You don't know how it could've been. I'm sick of you."

I duck all of the couch-cushions and kick-knacks, quick from years of practice. But each thing she throws makes me want to throw something back.

She's crying. And I'm glad. I want her to cry, to say she's sorry, to promise to try harder. And the hotness in me spills out, rushing, acidic.

"I'm sick of you, too. You think I like this? Look what I got stuck with. Stupid junkie devil-lover leech. Take, take, take, wherever we go, wring people dry then stomp all over their hearts. You do everything wrong. Always leaving me, then stealing me back just when it seems like I might get a chance in life, dragging me all over the whole stupid country in that stupid shit tin-can. Shooting up all the time, the crazy, the crash, hitting me all the time, and now this stupid church! Making me go to those meetings, making me watch you do those things, the stuff I have to do, the stuff you do to me!" I stop to pull in breath and see that she isn't crying anymore, that she's so still and her voice is very cold.

"Tip of the iceberg, baby," she says. "You can't even imagine what's in store."

I should listen to that cold edge. But inside me it's too hot and ripping through, and I have too many things that I haven't ever said.

"Imagine — imagine what? I can't imagine you doing any worse by me than you already have. Why don't you just kill me and get it over with? I'm never going to be like you, do what you all say I'm supposed to do. I'm not even going to give them one! You're the biggest loser in history. Me, a ball and chain, that's the stupidest thing I've ever heard. You're the ball and chain. It's always me taking care of you, hanging around picking up all your broken pieces. You think I like it with you? You think I stay because you're a good mother?"

I've said the forbidden thing, and I know it, and I don't care.

Her voice is hard. Each word pushes out, slow, final, deadly. "I am not your mother."

"You are. You are. You even just said so yourself. You're so dumb! You're my mother, and you know what? You're a loser, Mother, you're the worst mother anyone could ever have. You suck! Why do you let people hurt me all the time? It's like you go sniff them out or something. Mothers are supposed to protect their kids, even I know that. I only stay because I don't got nowhere else to go. That's all!"

She has moved very close to me and now she smashes her palm against the wall, but I'm so burning inside I don't even jump.

"Double negative," is what she says. "And girl, you have just talked yourself right out of your last place to stay. You better find some place to go, fast. I mean it. I don't care where. You got ten minutes; I'm counting now; ten minutes to get your hiyaller face out of my life. For good. For real. Forever. Now!"

The little crack in the band around my chest gives way, finally, right over my heart. And at its breaking I see suddenly that I have to choose: I have to either push through and ahead to the unthinkable, life without her, or retreat, close it over, and stay on this side of it forever.

She's so close to me that I can taste her air, and her electric-smell tells me that she's edged now with the finest lacing of the crazy. I don't think anymore. I'm slamming my palms into her shoulders with all the weight of my body and my remembering behind me.

She falls and it's true: I'm bigger and stronger now; I can fight back and win.

Afiya's door opens again and it's my turn to look at her, push her back with a hiss.

"The neighbors," she whispers, but when I step forward she retreats and clicks the door shut. I turn back and Rae's on her feet again, and holding the knife that she has already used once tonight.

"Jeez, Rae," I say.

"I'll kill you, you peabrain little shit. You have nine minutes."

I look at her, at her face, at the crazy hanging dark in her eyes. Then I'm all the way through the break at my heart, screaming.

"I hate you! I hate you! I hope you die! I hope you really do! I hope it shreds you up from the inside out and spins you everywhere! Go be devil-woman of the year. I don't care anymore. And when you all take over the world, don't come anywhere next to me! Stupid, crazy, crazy whore!"

It's the most insulting swear I can think of, the one I've heard her talk about, but never use. But all she says is, "Eight." We stand and stare at each other and she looks now and then at the clock on the living room wall. "Seven," she says. Then, "Six."

It takes me till "Five" to believe her. And then I'm scrambling, bumping down the hall, tearing on jeans and a T-shirt, grabbing whatever I can from the little bedroom and stuffing it into a plastic grocery bag. From the living room she yells out each number, her voice thicker and thicker with the crazy each time. Again, I feel at

the edge of my own jumping-over, but by the time she says "One" I am through the front door, and, again, running and crying.

There is no final passage, no sad or happy ending. Rae died ten years ago, when I was twelve. I wasn't there. She died alone. I didn't know. I found out the summer I was fifteen, when the runaway agency said they needed a parent's permission to let me stay at their shelter. I talked with him myself, the man at the city morgue. I went back, even, to the crack-house, talked with BJ, who had been there, who was one of the many who refused to identify her, who refused to get involved, who refused to pick up the broken pieces. At the county coroner's office, they keep pictures of the Jane Does. I couldn't look. Wouldn't. I had left in June. She died in August.

Report from New Zealand

S. H.

I was ritually abused many years ago, as a child. I do not want to write about that now. When I am ready, I will write my story.

There are New Zealand therapists who say, "There is no such thing as ritual abuse, and if there is, there isn't any in this country." The 'false memory syndrome' proponents are also alive and well here. However, I personally know there is a lot of ritual abuse in New Zealand. Some of it has been around for generations.

Some ritual abuse survivors I know about have had good assistance in healing, some haven't. In the late eighties, only a handful of therapists here worked with perhaps one client who had been ritually abused, though sometimes neither client nor therapist at first knew just what kind of abuse they were dealing with. Now more therapists are working with clients who recall being ritually abused.

The first known therapist in this country to work with a number of ritual abuse survivors was Elspeth Macdonald. (This is not her real name. She discussed the situation with her partner, and they gave me permission to tell her story, as long as her privacy was respected by the use of a pseudonym.) One of the most healing aspects of her work was the emphasis she put on 'standing alongside' her clients. Another was her belief, and her practice, that it is essential for therapists to interact with their whole selves, and that on-going personal development as well as professional supervision is essential.

At first neither Ms. Macdonald nor her clients knew exactly what they were dealing with. She learned to name the terrible things these clients were telling her at a workshop led by visiting Americans in 1990. Around that time, the police and Department of Social Welfare officers advised her on safety, recommending sensor lights around the house, deadlocks, etc. In that year, Ms. Macdonald invited a number of people from different agencies to join her in forming the 'Ritual Action Network' for mutual support

and information sharing. This network continued for a time, but I understand it has now ceased functioning.

One day in 1990, on her way out of town, Ms. Macdonald was harassed on the road by two men. She reported the harassment to the police in a town along the way, and it stopped. Two months later, in early 1991, she was assaulted on the way home from another out-of-town trip and suffered severe brain damage from head injuries. She will not be able to work as a therapist again, and her daily life is severely limited.

While good therapy makes a huge difference in healing, to my mind, the real experts on ritual abuse and recovery are the survivors who do the healing work. It is important to be clear that while there are many common things in survivors' lives, each of us is different and our experiences have affected us differently. We are not carbon copies of each other.

Like other survivors I know, I have worked with a number of therapists over the years, and sometimes come to dead ends with a particular therapist or kind of therapy. In my opinion, a major reason clients don't get adequate assistance is because, in New Zealand, as elsewhere, all too many therapists do not do their own on-going personal work, and this affects their clients adversely. Another reason is that survivors often cannot afford to pay for therapy. Also, some are not able to claim for it through our Accident Compensation system, which is suffering cutbacks like our other social services.

I am one of a group of survivors who support each other and share information. This stops us from feeling isolated and negated by those that say ritual abuse doesn't exist. We get much pleasure from each others' progress, how we are able to be so much more spontaneous, enriched by all that is in the world.

I am grateful to Jeanne Marie Lorena for her work in bringing survivors' stories together in this book.

Report from the Netherlands

P. Jonker-Bakker, MD. and F. Jonker, MD.

The following article is excerpted from a paper presented at the *Believe the Children* conference in Arlington Heights, IL, U.S.A., June 10-12, 1994, with the addition of information given in private communication. It is printed with permission of the authors.

We are husband and wife, and we are both doctors. For sixteen years, we have worked together as family practitioners in a small Dutch village near the German border.

In May of 1987, another family practitioner was confronted with a puzzling case of a four-year-old boy with anal bleeding. The child told his mother and the doctor of a series of bizarre events; of men and boys putting sticks in his anus, of being burned with cigarettes, and of seeing parts of dead babies in plastic bags.

The police were notified; the boy named a friend, and the investigation, at the end of a week, uncovered twenty-five children, all allegedly victims of sexual abuse. The children confirmed each others' stories, many times in exact detail, even though not all the children knew each other. We began seeing these children in our practice three days after the first disclosure.

Children of both sexes, ranging in age from three to twelve, reported that in the past year they had been forced, either singly or in groups, to go to various buildings in the vicinity. They spoke of abuse of an extremely sadistic and perverse nature. They told of being given injections, 'nasty' lemonade, and pills that made them sleepy. Many children spoke of people shooting film and taking photographs. They told us that they were forbidden to talk to their parents about any of this, and that if they told, their parents would be killed, or their houses burned down.

Our first reaction was: how could such awful things be possible? Or how could a child's imagination be so vivid? Many people considered the children's stories fantasies, since they were so bizarre. They talked of 'rambo knives,' murdered babies,

churches, people dressed as clowns or animals. Not all of the children described the same events, but most spoke of all of these events on various occasions.

Several parents wrote down their children's reports, and several older children added more details later. Six weeks after the first disclosure, the Justice Department arranged to have most of the children interviewed by a Dutch expert in child psychiatry, who confirmed the authenticity of their memories.

We decided to survey the children in order to gather data as fast as possible, before information was lost or contaminated. We wanted to quantify our clinical impressions and to study behavioral changes in the children. We also wanted to understand how this could happen in our small community. How was it possible that nobody had seen or heard anything? Had the children been missing for hours?

We interviewed parents of eighty-seven children six weeks after the first disclosure, and did follow-up interviews two and half years and seven years later. We concluded:

- The children had signs and symptoms consistent with sexual abuse.
- A large group of children experienced a 'modest' level of physical abuse and threats. They were abducted, held under water, photographed, bound, and punched. They attended 'parties' where adults sang and dressed up as clowns and animals. Perhaps this was a selection method to obtain a smaller group of children who were subjected to more severe physical abuse and sexual activities. A still smaller group of children were abused in very sadistic and bizarre ways. These children, who were extremely intimidated, reported killing many animals and being involved with murdering babies, a child, and an elderly couple.
- At follow-up, most children displayed good mental health. We believe this was due to safe surroundings and parents who were able to listen with an accepting attitude. Of course, we do not know how these children will eventually develop.
- Children who were involved in the more extreme activities showed more alarming symptoms, including hearing voices, nightmares, insomnia, extreme fears, and self-mutilation.

We had to believe the children's stories; we had to believe the physical signs of abuse and their emotional responses. We had to believe the parents when they said their children had been missing for hours; children had been seen in unfamiliar cars; clowns had

been seen in the village. We did not completely understand, and we had many, many questions. Why so many children? Why such bizarre events?

The media quickly learned of the situation and began to report developments. The media's attitude shocked us. People who had never spoken with the children (or anyone else directly involved) decided from a distance that the situation could only be explained by mass hysteria, the product of witch-hunters and fundamentalists, of people who wanted to create a big scandal. Even people with reputations as experts wrote in this manner.

Society likes to see the good aspects of life, and to have the satisfaction of believing that children are growing up happy and healthy. It is hard to hear and accept that cruel things happen. People would prefer to believe in mass hysteria and deny that children have been harmed.

The backlash caused additional trauma to the children and their families, blocking or delaying their process of healing. Experts and society as a whole started to analyze the process of 'mass hysteria,' instead of analyzing what really happened. The idea of 'mass hysteria' became a big media event without any apparent relation to the children's abuse.

One of the basic purposes of the introduction of the theory of mass hysteria could be to enforce silence about ritual abuse. The mixture of lies, misinterpretations, fantasies, and actual events all attracted attention away from the children and their suffering.

At first, we were not able to struggle against this backlash and the media attacks upon us. We needed our energy for our work as family practitioners, and to support the traumatized children and their families.

We chose to believe the children. We had been confronted with so many statements, so many emotional, physical, and behavioral signs, that we had no reason to believe that all this could be mass hysteria.

We found that arguing with the unbelievers was an endless task. It is our experience that ritualistic abuse discoveries are greeted by an almost hostile environment of disbelief. The media, and even family, friends, and colleagues who had previously been supportive, suggested that we were tired, too caught up in our own fantasies, were too busy, read too much.

The first period is the most difficult because you are not sure what is going on. You may be struggling yourself to believe bizarre events you have never heard of before, but at the same time, you

know that there is no other possible explanation when you examine the children and parents. You are confused and hurt when non-believers call you witch-hunter, moral crusader, or mad. It is difficult to know what to think. Why are the non-believers so aggressive and persistent, so judgmental, so lying?

You may also have self-doubts later on. The pressure often feels too much. We found that we got depressed, lonely, and sometimes had the desire to stop this work. In order to go on, we found ourselves rationalizing the facts, which was dangerous, because we were concealing our own emotions.

Winning or losing the struggle against the backlash depends on many factors. 'Ego' is very important. Are you personally strong enough to survive? If so, you won't need to doubt or deny as much.

Second in importance is your professional situation. Your chance to survive depends on the support and coaching of your superiors and on the long-term support of your colleagues. If support is not there, you might even lose your job, as has happened in several cases.

In private practice, as we are, the group cannot protect you. You are more vulnerable and exposed. Your survival depends on the acceptance and attitude of your clients or patients and on your relationship with other professionals and officials. On the other hand, being independent does have the benefit of not needing to defend yourself to superiors.

Clearly, winning the struggle is more likely when you have support in your immediate environment from family and friends. Increased support comes from networking with other professionals and survivors, both inside the borders of your own country and internationally.

As time passed, and with the help of our new national and international friends, we heard and learned much more about ritual abuse. It was difficult at first, because there was nearly no literature available in the Netherlands.

We began to attend conferences and give presentations about our experience. We took part in a documentary produced by the Norwegian Justice Department, "*Throw-away Children*," and the Italian documentary, "*L'Etat Negata*." We networked with people in the U.S.A., the U.K., Germany, Denmark, and Belgium. And we founded ENBAR (*European Network for Backlash Research*).

We came to recognize that the same kind of backlash had taken place in other countries. The backlash is no longer a hostile and

vague shadow, but a recognizable and predictable phenomenon, involving many of the same people in each instance.

There is one positive aspect of the backlash: it urges us to be critical of our own work, theories, and attitudes, and this self-examination will make us stronger. But the struggle will be forever unequal without more research. It is quite easy to say that ritual abuse is all mass hysteria without research.

The negative consequences are great. The purpose of the backlash is to enforce silence about the reality of child sexual abuse, particularly ritual abuse. One of the biggest dangers of the backlash (and in some cases also the desire of the people who started the movement) is that people confronted with sexual or ritualistic abuse will keep silent for fear of the consequences. They have seen what happened to other investigators, and do not wish to be attacked in the same way. But the only way to stop the backlash, and to stop abuse, is to find proof of abuse.

We will have to motivate Justice Departments to look for proof. If the desire to find proof is there, it must be possible. We hope through international networking that there will be both support and exchange of information. We must continue to speak out. We must not allow ourselves to be silenced.

Resources

Jeanne Marie Lorena

I decided against including a long list of books and organizations, since information becomes outdated so fast. Instead, I will just talk about what I found useful in my own healing.

The most complete listing of resources I know of is the *Knowledge Can Heal: Resource Directory* published by B.E.A.M. (Being Energetic About Multiplicity), P. O. Box 20428, Louisville, KY 40250-0428. It's beautifully organized, easy to use, and has well over a hundred pages of North American and international organizations.

There are two books on healing that I have read and reread until they became dog-eared and I'd practically memorized them. One is *Safe Passage to Healing: A Guide for Survivors of Ritual Abuse* by Chrystine Oksana (Harper Perennial, NY, NY, 1994). It is wise, gentle, compassionate, and practical.

The other one is *Ritual Abuse: What It Is, Why It Happens, How to Help* by Margaret Smith (HarperSanFrancisco, San Francisco CA, 1993). This book speaks to people who are still being cult abused or who are having difficulty breaking contact with their abusers.

For educating family and friends, the Los Angeles County Commission for Women's booklet *Ritual Abuse: Definitions, Glossary, The Use of Mind Control* (Ritual Abuse Task Force, 383 Hall of Administration, 500 West Temple St., Los Angeles, CA 90012) is concise and useful. Another good introduction is *Raising Hell: An Encyclopedia of Devil Worship and Satanic Crime* by Michael Newton (Avon Books, NY, NY, 1993).

There aren't nearly enough book-length accounts of ritual abuse and healing. My favorite is *Where the Rivers Join* by BeckyLane (Press Gang, Vancouver, BC, Canada, 1995). I also like *Lessons from the Light: A True Story of Satanic Abuse and Spiritual Healing* by Gail Carr Feldman (Crown, NY, NY, 1993).

and *Suffer the Child* by Judith Spencer (Pocket Books, NY, NY, 1989).

Putting cult abuse in historical and sociological perspective helped me break the programming that the cult was unique and all-powerful. *Other Altars: Roots and Realities of Cultic and Satanic Ritual Abuse* by Craig Lockwood (CompCare Publishers, Minneapolis, MN, 1993) and *Cult and Ritual Abuse: Its History, Anthropology, and Recent Discovery in Contemporary America* by James R. Noblitt and Pamela S. Perskin (Praeger, Westport, CN, 1995) were both helpful.

The B.E.A.M. *Resource Directory* lists many newsletters for survivors. *Survivorship* (297 El Camino Real., San Bruno, CA 94066) has provided me with validation, inspiration, and something approaching sanity since its inception in 1988. I suppose I could live without this publication, but I would not be happy.

More and more information on ritual abuse and mind control is appearing on the Internet. A good place to start exploring information on the World Wide Web is the *Ritual Abuse, Ritual Crime, and Healing* home page at <http://www.xroads.com/rahome>. From here, you can travel to almost every site that deals with ritual abuse.

(If the address of the RA Home Page changes, or if you have trouble connecting to it, enter "ritual abuse" in one of the search engines.)

Each person is individual, with needs that change over time. My favorite resources will not automatically be yours. Please use these suggestions as a starting point in your search for books, newsletters, and organizations to help you on your own healing journey.

"Why is it so important for survivors to write their histories? By speaking out, we shatter the silence in which abuse thrives. We stop running and turn to face our greatest fears.

Our courage astonishes even us and our strength rises. The power of our grief, our anger, our compassion for our own pain infuses us. We know we are sacred. We honor life.

Thank you for an important work."

—Ellen Bass

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